THE ASSIMILATION OF (SHIA) LEBANESE-ORIGIN YOUTH INTO CANADA: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

by

Ali El Hajj-Hassan

B.A., The University of Western Ontario, 2012

M.A., The University of Western Ontario, 2013

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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the dissertation entitled:

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Examining Committee:

Juanita Sundberg, Geography Department, University of British Columbia
Supervisor

Rafi Arefin, Geography Department, University of British Columbia
Supervisory Committee Member

Dina Al-Kassim, English Department, University of British Columbia
Supervisory Committee Member

Minelle Mahtani, Institute for Social Justice, University of British Columbia
University Examiner

Sunera Thobani, Asian Studies Department, University of British Columbia
University Examiner

Zulfikar Hirji, Anthropology Department, York University
External Examiner

Anna Secor, Geography Department, Durham University
External Examiner

Additional Supervisory Committee Member:

Jim Glassman, Geography Department, University of British Columbia
Supervisory Committee Member

Abstract

To the growing body of research on the assimilation of Lebanese-origin youth into Canada, I contribute an argument about acculturative stress—an analysis of the antagonism between the spheres of home/family and school/society based on my own development as a child migrant. This time-variant approach helps redress prevalent misconceptions regarding the impact of acculturative stress on the relationship between the first and subsequent generations. Simultaneously, it critiques the misleading association of heteronomy with the sphere of home/family and individual flourishing with the sphere of school/society. The first half of the dissertation charts my understanding of the antagonism between these spheres across four inscapes or eras of interiority including: Prevarication, Detachment, Freedom and Objective Irony. The second half evokes the personal consequences of this antagonism through a series of fragmentary dialogues, a strategic method for assessing the possibility of its attenuation without performing it in the text. This dissertation, in sum, contributes to the understanding of an under-represented experience of assimilation as well as the good and productive types of challenges posed to Canada by the migrant communities that resist adaptation to it.

Lay Summary

This dissertation provides a personal account of the acculturative stress Lebanese-origin youth might experience in contemporary Canadian society, of navigating a culturally rooted disjuncture between the spheres of home/family and school/society. It therefore redresses the lack of both thick or qualitative and time-variant, developmentally sensitive contributions to the existing body of research. In doing so, this dissertation challenges common misconceptions of the conflicts that result from differential integration within Lebanese-origin family units into Canada, and of the long-term effects of the tension arising between the first and subsequent generations. Finally, it offers a range of possible solutions.

Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, A. El Hajj-Hassan. The fieldwork reported throughout was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H16-01200.

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Glossary of Terms in Arabic[1]

abu	father of
amal	hope
beit	house of
hala al-islamiyya	Hizballah’s sphere of influence or resistance culture
haram	forbidden
hijra	emigration
intifada	revolt
jihad	a personal struggle against the forces of adversity and oppression
mahrumin	dispossessed
mukallaf	responsible
muqawama	resistance
shahada	an affirmation or declaration of faith stating: “There is no god but God. Muhammad is the messenger of God.” In the Shia context there is the addendum: “Ali is the viceregent of God.”
sirata lmustaqim	the straight path
sura	verse
talaba	students
um	mother of
waswâsah	whisperings
zaim/zuma’	tribal chieftain/s

[1] I would note that these terms have a wide semantic range, that their connotations depend on the context of their use and reception and that they are employed in nuanced ways within both jurisprudential and popular discourses. Where they emerge in the text, the rough translations provided here will be supplemented by more thorough, judicious definitions. Additionally, I would note that I have chosen to use lower-case for phonetically spelled Arabic words because there are no capital letters in Arabic.

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جزيل الشكر والامتنان لأهلي وعائلتي على دعمهم المستمر، وتوجيههم لي منذ صغري

(Many thanks and gratitude to my parents and family for their continuous support and guidance)

Shout out as well to all those—the teachers, friends, partners and adversaries—who played a role in the cultivation of this text. To you I am eternally grateful.

Dedication

For Adam.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the early-1990s my parents and I relocated from Lebanon to Canada. We settled in London, a medium sized Ontario town located just 192kms southwest of Toronto, a major hub of the Lebanese diaspora.[2] Devout Twelvers[3] with a critical perspective on the west, an "imaginary place" they call "Amereeka" consisting of the United States (U.S.), Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand (Abdelhady 2011, 22), my parents are also members of the Civil War[4] (1975-1990) generation. In contemporary Lebanese discourse, theirs is a generation associated with a

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[2] Following Rogers Brubaker (2005, 5-6), I understand diaspora as a phenomenon constituted by three core criteria: dispersion, homeland orientation and boundary-maintenance. Forced or otherwise, according to this definition, the dispersion in space of a given community need not cross state borders. The second criterion refers to the persistence of "a real or imagined 'homeland' as an authoritative source of value, identity and loyalty" (Ibid, 5). Without necessarily involving a "teleology of return" (Clifford 1994, 305-6), homeland orientation implies an ongoing commitment to relate to the homeland "in a way that significantly shapes one's identity and solidarity" (Brubaker 2005, 5; see also Safran 1991, 83-84). The third criterion, boundary-maintenance, refers to attempts to preserve "a distinctive identity vis-à-vis a host society" (Ibid, 6; see also Tölölyan 1996, 14 and Cohen 1997, 24). The Arab diaspora in North America consists of numerous diasporas—Yemini, Syrian, Palestinian, Jordanian, Lebanese, etc.—which in turn present with their own peculiarly weighted combination of these criteria. The different reasons they have for leaving their respective homelands, the variety of their commitments to them and their attitudes toward assimilation means that while these communities find comfort in the presence of one another, they nevertheless retain their boundaries.

[3] "Twelver," or Ithnā ʿAšarīyah, is a term referring to the belief in twelve divinely ordained leaders or Imams held by the largest branch of Shia Islam. Relatives of the Prophet Mohammed, the Imams are religious scholars, initiatory guides and the revealed face of God (Amir-Moezzi 2005). The teachings of Ali B. Abi Taleb (600-661), Hasan B. Ali B. Abi Taleb (625-670), Hosayn B. Ali B. Abi Taleb (627-670), Ali. B. Al-Hosyan B. Ali. B. Abi Taleb (659-713), Mohammad al-Baqer (677-733), Ja'far al-Sadeq (702-765), Musa al-Kazem (745-799), Ali al-Reza (775-818), Mohammad al-Taqiy (811-835), Ali al-Hadi (829-868), Hasan al-Askari (846-874) and Mohammad al-Mahdi (869-), transmitted orally as well as in writing, form the basis of Twelver doctrine (Ibid). The twelfth of the Imams, al-Mahdi, is said to have "vanished to the eyes of ordinary men in 873-874, to return at some future date and fill the earth with justice" (Ajami 1986, 21). While the existence of the Imams and their exoteric teachings are relatively uncontroversial in Sunni Islam their revelation as the face of God is. Other Shia groups, such as the Ismailis, recognize only a number of the twelve Imams as being divinely ordained (Amir-Moezzi 2005). Unless stated otherwise, wherever "Shia" appears in the text it is intended as a shorthand for Ithnā ʿAšarīyah.

[4] The Lebanese Civil war began in 1975 and endured for fifteen years. An internecine conflict that was originally fought over the presence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in Lebanon, it quickly became the backdrop of a number of proxy wars. For more authoritative and detailed English language accounts I recommend Noam Chomsky (1999), Robert Fisk (2001), Edgar O'Balance (1998), Sandra Mackey (2013), Kamal Salibi (1976, 1988), Michael Johnson (2001) and Samir Kassir (2003).

rigid particularism or, more derogatorily, “Taifi mindset.”[5] To a Lebanese person it would therefore come as no surprise that my parents have remained steadfast in their resistance to assimilation. Nor would they be surprised to learn that, in the main, this has involved containing mine. Growing up my interactions with Canadian classmates were anxiously managed, my weekends were spent in either Arabic or Islamic school and my summers in Lebanon. The scene is indeed a familiar one: a child migrant must learn to navigate the competition over their allegiance between the spheres of home/family and school/society, an expectation that they conform to the culture of the homeland and an emerging desire to fit in, to wear and eat the same things as and share experiences in common with their peer group. So why restage it?

Research Problem and Significance of the Study

The existing research, reviewed in this chapter, on the assimilation of Lebanese-origin youth to Canada encapsulates much of my experience. It predicts the antagonism that arose between my private and public life, the ensuing conflict with my parents and many of its forms of expression. That said, it largely underplays the personal and psychological impacts of this antagonism. Existing research, I believe, also fails to interrogate the broader questions entangled in the conflict with my parents: questions of interiority, justice and spiritual belief. Among the reasons, perhaps the greatest is a common assumption that the effects of assimilation are readily apparent, that experiences of them do not change and develop. Not only have I had different, and indeed, contradictory understandings of my experience of assimilation, but I draw ultimate

[5] The Taif Accord is the agreement which brought an end to the Civil War, ratified by the Lebanese Parliament on 5 November 1989 (see Fisk 2001, 638). It set in place the clientelist system of goods distribution—horizontally between tribal chieftains and then vertically within confessions—that has been the hallmark of governance in Lebanon ever since. The connotation of a Taifi mindset is therefore a stubborn and self-stultifying reverence for one’s chieftain.

significance or meaning from the order in which I had them. The order teaches me that I cannot evaluate attempts to decolonize myself, to reverse the effects of my assimilation, outside of the context of social justice having been elevated to the status of popular culture (Whiteout 2018, Morris et al. 2020). By way of redressing the lack of import the existing research attributes to the antagonism between the spheres of home/family and school/society, as well as connecting it to broader themes and concerns, this dissertation contributes a time lapse of my understanding of the problems posed to me by assimilation. In addition to other children belonging to the small network of Shia Lebanese families in London, ON, then, this project also speaks to the fields of migration studies, human geography and subaltern studies. The remainder of this introduction outlines the field-specific contributions of this dissertation as well as its methodology and challenges.

Migration Studies

What can the reflections of a child migrant add to migration studies? The field came to prominence following World War II, when a confluence of political, economic and technological developments spurred an unprecedented level of international migration (Gold and Nawyn 2019, xxiv). Generally, the field makes inquiries about the "age of migration" (Castles and Miller 2014, 7) that fall under one of two categories: why do people migrate and what are the impacts of their doing so? Research into what motivates immigration has, in turn, spawned behaviorist (Lewis 1954, Ranis and Fei 1961, Sjaastad 1962, Todaro 1969, Harris and Todaro 1970, Todaro and Maruszko 1987 and Schiff 1994), neo-Marxist (Wallerstein 1974, Portes and Walton 1981, Petras 1981 and Sassen 1988) and network-based theories (Hugo 1981, Lucas and Stark 1985, Taylor 1986 and Lever-Tracey and Quinlan 1988). While research into the impact of international migration is organized according to sending societies (Rostow 1960, Kindleberger

1967, Adler 1981, Penninx 1982, Papademetriou and Martin 1991, Taylor et al. 1996, Ozden and Schiff 2005, Agunias 2006 and de Haas 2007), receiving societies (Hage 1998, Ye'or 2005, Laurence 2006, Castles and Miller 2014 and Bornstein et al. 2019) and immigrants themselves (Rumbaut 1991, 2004, 2006, Kibria 2002, Joppke and Morawska 2002, Kasinitz et al. 2008 and Soehl and Waldinger 2012). Of greatest relevance to this dissertation is the second set of questions and, in particular, the literature concerning the impact of migration on immigrants themselves, the individual psychology of assimilation or "attenuation of distinctions based on ethnic origin" (Richard and Nee 2003, 38).

Considering that a quarter of Canada's population of Arab immigrants are from Lebanon (Abdelhady 2011, 23), there is surprisingly little research on Canada's Lebanese ethnic communities. And only a small portion of that research concerns itself with assimilation specifically. I count work on the identity formation of the diaspora in Montreal (Abdelhady 2011), multiculturalism and the lived experience of the second-generation in Halifax (Tastsoglou and Petrinioti 2011), group and individual factors of assimilation to Ontario (Hayani 1999), immigrant family life in Edmonton (B. Abu-Laban and S. Abu-Laban 1999, and S. Abu Laban and B. Abu-Laban 1999) and the social worlds of young Shia students in "non-diverse public schools" (Al-Fartousi 2016).[6] The major themes arising from the body of literature I will be building upon throughout this dissertation are as follows.

The first is differential integration within family units. Abdelhady (2011, 49), for example, finds that Lebanese men are more likely than women to stress their distinctiveness and

[6] It must be said that the interventions of Hayani and the Abu-Labans are concerned with the assimilation of Arabs more generally. Aside from the paucity of options, I include them because a substantial portion of the respondents that each study drew from were Lebanese.

establish boundaries between themselves and majoritarian Canadian groups.[7] They are more likely to do so, she gathers, because of the diminution of their stature within a society that contravenes "patriarchal family structure[s]" (Ibid, 50). By contrast, Abdelhady's (Ibid) female respondents eschewed "ethnic narratives" while discussing their feelings about Canada and instead stressed the availability of well-paying jobs, quality of education and universal healthcare benefits. Alternatively, in the study of Tastsoglou and Petrinioti (2011, 176) varying rates of assimilation between parents and children are highlighted. As has been demonstrated across a wide variety of immigrant groups (see for example Rumbaut 1991, Kibria 2002, Joppke and Morawska 2002, Kasinitz et al. 2008 and Soehl and Waldinger 2012), the first generation of Lebanese Canadians are demonstrably "less likely to shed their native languages, customs and identities in the process of accommodation to the[ir] new society" (Rumbaut 2004, 1167).[8] Like Hayani (1999, 296), Al-Fartousi (2016, 193) and B. and S. Abu-Laban (1999, 142), Tastsoglou and Petrinioti (2011, 176) attribute this to the relative exposure of the younger generations to Canadian institutions, peer groups and mass media.

The second theme, following naturally from the first, is the tension arising for the younger generations between the spheres of home/family and school/society (S. Abu-Laban and B. Abu-Laban 1999, 114). During adolescence, when their focus shifts from gaining the approval of their parents to that of their friends (Ibid, 113), the newcomer family unit is said to present Lebanese-origin youth with "heightened potential for tension" (B. Abu-Laban and S. Abu-Laban

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[7] Strictly speaking, by majoritarian Canadian I mean the nation's "canonical" English and French groups (Day 2000). Later on, the term will be used to refer to the members of any group who, from my perspective, appear free to be the same, people who need not be concerned that their difference will be called attention to by deficient adaptation to the hegemonic experiences and attitudes encountered within Canada's public education system.

[8] A survey of Arab immigrants in Ontario Hayani (1999, 295) found that just over one-half of the second generation can speak Arabic and that only one in six can read it. Similarly, very few of Tastsoglou and Petrinioti's (2011, 186) interviewees, also second generation, identified themselves as proficient in Arabic.

1999, 143). Parents, worried that their efforts to inculcate their children with respect for "Lebanese traditions and values" are being undermined at school, attempt to extend their control over other avenues of public life (Abdelhady 2011, 50). The respondents of Tastsoglou and Petrinioti (2011, 189), for example, complained of attempts by their parents to monopolize their free time, steering them toward activities organized by their Maronite church and encouraging intra-community friendships. Those of S. and B. Abu-Laban (1999, 127) likewise complained of "more household work, more travelling, and more attendance of public functions with parents." In addition to the usual urge to fit in, the influence of the sphere of school/society is, in turn, exerted through discriminatory practices and comments that can cow Lebanese-origin adolescents into dissimulating their background (Tastsoglou and Petrinioti 2011, 191, S. Abu-Laban and B. Abu-Laban 1999, 119). Al-Fartousi (2016, 193) for example writes about "the peer pressure and racis[m]…that diminished my daughter's self-esteem and confidence." Aside from her, however, contributors to the literature tend to dismiss the possibility that racism is endemic to the learning environment of Canada's public school system. Tastsoglou and Petrinioti (2011, 191) found, for example, that "[a]s higher grades of education were achieved, a socialization of egalitarianism and tolerance for difference as well as exposure to students of diverse origins, as in university, seemed to make peer groups more accepting." Indeed, there is something approaching a consensus among researchers on the influence of the sphere of school/society being significantly less heteronomous than the influence of the sphere of home/family. This is evident in the terms used to frame the competition between the two spheres over the loyalty and sense of identity of Lebanese-origin youth (S. Abu-Laban and B. Abu-Laban 1999, 116).

The third theme to highlight is the characterization of these youth as caught "between two cultures, with divergent values and divergent institutions" (S. Abu-Laban and B. Abu-Laban

1999, 116). In the final analysis, the antagonism between the spheres of home/family and school/society is found to be rooted in the irreconcilability of Lebanese and Canadian cultures, with the former defined as "collectivist in orientation, emphasizing the group, hierarchical relationships, harmony and conformity" and the latter as "individualistic in orientation, emphasizing…privacy, the value of personal fulfillment [and] independence" (Ibid, 121). More significantly, Canadian culture is distinguished by its hybridity, its multi- and flexible nature (Tastsoglou and Petrinioti 2011, 182, Hayani 1999, 292). For certain, one finds in the existing research an especially "thick" description of Canadian multiculturalism.[9] Abdelhady (2010, 87, 130) describes it as the structure of "diasporic consciousness" to support for "postessential, postterritorial and postnational" identifications that cut across all diasporic communities and "challenge the traditions of both their homeland and host societies." To the extent that the two cultures are incongruent, then, it is mostly so on account of Lebanese (or indeed "Arab") culture's zero-sum approach to identification **(**Tastsoglou and Petrinioti 2011, 181). Respondents of Tastsoglou and Petrinioti (Ibid, 180), for example, attributed the antagonism between their private and public lives to "backward" aspects of their parents' culture, its chauvinism, gender imbalance and proclivity for gossiping. Verily, immigrants who choose to retain their ethno-religious customs and beliefs are reduced to the proverbial products of a "parochial upbringing"

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[9] Will Kymlicka (2004) suggests that multiculturalism can be described as a social fact, policy and normative framework. Accordingly, as a social fact multiculturalism refers to the sheer diversity of people in Canada. As a policy it is "first and foremost about developing new models of democratic citizenship, grounded in human rights ideals, to replace earlier uncivil and undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion" (2007, 101). As a normative framework multiculturalism is what Charles Taylor (1975, 461) has, in his adaptation of Hegel, termed a "post-industrial *Sittlichkeit*," an ethical community of equal and mutual recognition between a multiplicity of nations within a single state. Following Day (2000) and Kamboureli (2000), I would add that multiculturalism can also be described as an ideology, by which I mean it is presented as an overcoming of the bloody history of the management of diversity in Canada.

(Abdelhady 2011, 187). Except of course by Al-Fartousi (2016, 215-8), the only contributor who ventures to show deficient adaptation to Canadian culture in a positive light.

In a sense this dissertation functions as an acknowledgement to my parents that they were right; it would have been better for me not to emulate Amereeka. I might otherwise have a more enchanted perspective and be freer too. I look to share the journey I took to arrive at this conclusion by exploring, expanding and hopefully exploding the above interrelated themes: differential integration within the family unit, the antagonism between the spheres of home/family and school/society and the clash between Lebanese and Canadian culture.

Subaltern Studies

This dissertation examines whether the postcolonial intellectual really must resign themself to adjudicating the limits of knowledge (Varadharajan 1995, xxiv). The question emerged and became preponderant in the aftermath of the Subaltern Studies Group (SSG), founded in the early 1980s by Shahid Amin (1950-), David Arnold (1946-), Partha Chatterjee (1947-), David Hardiman (1947-), Ranajit Guha (1923-) and Gyanendra Pandey (1950-). These historians were banded together by their disappointment with “the ‘failure’ of India after 1947 to fulfill the high expectations created by the nationalist movement” (Arnold 2015, 260). For despite the promises of decolonization, India reborn had retained much of the reactionary, racist and sexist practices that characterized the era of the Raj; the resolution of the outward facing colonial conflict was belied by the persistence of internal class and gender conflicts (Morton 2003, 51). What’s more, its new nationalist parties worked to actively attribute to themselves the contributions to decolonization made by subaltern groups, “the men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals [and] the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat” (Spivak 1988,

25).[10] The main aim of the SSG was to recover these contributions, to write a history of decolonization “from below” (Morton 2003, 6). Between the historical archives of the British Empire, in which subaltern voices are subordinated to a wider project of imperial governance, and elite narratives of national independence that subsume localized episodes of resistance, there were however very few resources that the SSG had recourse to (Morton 2003, 50). And so, the reports on agrarian relations and communalism in Bengal (Chatterjee 1982), the Gudem-Rampa uprisings (Arnold 1982) and the peasant movement in Awadh (Pandey 1982), revelatory in and of themselves, have in the fullness of time become synonymous with the “intractability of an ethical representation of the oppressed” (Ganguly 2015, 5).

The most public challenger, and subsequent contributor, to the SSG was Gayatri Spivak.[11] She maintained that there can be no ethical representation of the oppressed whatsoever, that even in the efforts of the SSG there could be divined an essentializing impulse, a defacement of the subaltern (Morton 2003, 53). What the SSG understood as a strategic use of the discourse of class consciousness, Spivak recognized as a symptom of their entrapment in a Eurocentric worldview that marginalizes the subaltern and their cultural and epistemic traditions (Young 2004, 202-3). She relied on Derrida (1978, 282) to highlight the “problem of the status of a discourse which borrows from a heritage the resources necessary for the deconstruction of that heritage itself.” Put differently, how could the SSG effectively rewrite history when the very model of history was so much a product of the history they wanted to rewrite (Young 2000, 189)? This, the central problem of deconstruction, is the problem of the complicity of knowledge

[10] The SSG adopted the term subaltern from the work of Antonio Gramsci (1975). Gramsci deployed the term as a corrective for Marx’s proletariat. Unlike that of the latter, subaltern opposition to the state was neither systematic nor coherent (Morton 2003, 47).
[11] Spivak’s critique was subsequently accepted by most members of the SSG (perhaps with the exception of David Arnold). She joined the editorial board in 1993 (Chatterjee 2010, 83).

and power. The subaltern, infinitely divided along lines of class, caste and gender, can only be effaced, "silenced and contained within the technical vocabulary of western critical theory" (Morton 2003, 7). Because the "conceptual, cultural and ideological legacy of colonialism [are] inherent in the very structures and institutions that formed the condition of decolonization" (Ibid, 195), the subaltern—a figure Spivak embodies in the "Third World Woman"—cannot even represent her own interest or identity.[12] The moment she does she simply stops being subaltern (Chow 1998, 3).

Spivak's intervention left subaltern studies and the postcolonial intellectual more generally in a bind between the urgency of writing from below and the risk of becoming a "Native Informant,"[13] someone who, whether consciously or otherwise, leverages their presumed marginality to satisfy and so profit from the curiosity of "first world intellectuals" (Spivak 1988, 284). As Asha Varadharajan (1995, xvi) further explains,

> [a]gency is a treacherous business in the realm of 'mental miscegenation' that postcolonial intellectuals inhabit. The reproduction of the conquest of land in the colonization of the mind serves as a baleful yet crucial reminder of the impossibility of authenticity. That the postcolonial intellectual is 'a stranger in his own native land' is no longer surprising and is in fact the condition of her claim (one that she makes at her peril) that she 'really knows what she is talking about.'

So, must the postcolonial intellectual content themselves with adjudicating the limits of knowledge, with embalming the figure of the subaltern in the "ontological residue of the failure of representation [and] self-reflection" (Ibid, xxiv)?

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[12] The importance of the Third World Woman to Spivak's work cannot be understated; the quintessential subaltern is the female labourer employed in sweatshops by multinational corporations. In Spivak's (1988, 305) discussion of *sati*, the Hindu tradition of widow self-immolation, we find the most direct engagement with the compound effacement of Third World Woman. While the Raj exploited *sati* as evidence for the need of a civilizing mission in India, elite male nativists exploited the Raj's exploitation of *sati* as cultural imperialism, insisting that women who performed it did so out of their own volition. In neither the discourse of modernity nor that of defiant nativism, then, was the voice of the sexed subaltern given room to emerge (Ibid, 307). For Spivak this is a typical example of the peculiar burden of imperialism women bear.

[13] For the sake of clarity and emphasis, I have capitalized concepts which are most central to this dissertation.

I believe that the answer to this question is a personal matter. Or rather, it can only be answered when applied to a concrete set of circumstances. In my case, I first encountered the problem of deconstruction, the reflective paralysis it names, in the ultimate phase of my understanding of the problem of assimilation. After realizing that my assimilation, an end I pursued largely in the classroom, entailed a great deal of mental miscegenation, I attempted to reverse the process by returning to my roots. A graduate student in geography at the time, I thought it would be a good idea to include as part of this return an ethnography of my natal village; this could act as a modest contribution to the representation of a marginalized people but also an opportunity to subvert the vehicle of my colonization, my education and redirect its resources toward contrary ends. I discovered the problem of deconstruction upon returning from preliminary fieldwork and presenting initial findings to a symposium of my peers, when the subtext of the interaction brought home the possibility that I was yet again succumbing to the urge to accommodate myself to my majoritarian Canadian peers. The irony of marginality being so "in" at the time.

I have since arrived at an understanding of this irony as objective in the sense that, unlike the irony of language or figural speech, it "refers to the limits of human meaning…[to] the forces that exceed our choices" (Colebrook 2004, 13). Objective irony here resembles the concept of "world historic irony" Nietzsche (2006, 175; see also Kaufman 2013, 243) applied to (what he understood to be) the complete corruption of Christ's message by the Catholic church. It shares the spirit also of Jean Baudrillard's (2008, 75) assertion that irony was "no longer ours to exercise…no longer a function of the subject; it is an objective function…in which the absence and transparency of the subject is reflected." It is, in other words, an irony of fate. Like the

aporia of deconstruction it begs, "on what basis can we secure the sincerity and authenticity of speech" (Ibid, 2)?

At first, it was with despair and resignation that I reacted to the challenge of Objective Irony. I struggled especially with all the synchronicities that followed from it, the Jungian-like "coincidences in which a person's dream or thought is matched by something that happens in the physical world, without it being possible that either event could have caused the other" (Main 2004, 1-2). Everything from my reading materials to the media I consumed and snippets of conversation from passing strangers seemed to be conspiring to remind me of Objective Irony, that I cannot undo my mental miscegenation. The worst such synchronicity was a discolouration that appeared above my brow and precipitated a prolonged and painful episode of hypochondria.

Around this time, I came across Theodor Adorno's *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life* (2005). I was especially struck by an aphorism in the opening pages that read "there is no longer beauty or consolation except in the gaze falling on horror, withstanding it, and in unalleviated consciousness of negativity holding fast to the possibility of what is better" (Ibid, 25). In it I found, like Varadharajan (1995, 80) before me, the idea that hope for a better world exists in tension with the risk of backfiring motivations, that indeed it is produced by that tension. I found, put otherwise, that the fear of my discolouration might be harnessed to turn thought against itself (Ibid, 120). In addition to a snapshot of how great the threat of being a Native Informant has become now that the fight for social justice has been elevated to the status of popular culture (Whiteout 2018, 63), this dissertation therefore contributes to subaltern studies an example of a partial, concretized solution to the complicity of power and knowledge.

Human Geography

Human geography is a modern discipline, by which I mean it is a by-product of the Enlightenment (1680-1815), an historical and intellectual development characterized by "new ways of critically thinking about the world" (Withers 2020, 137). Following Shea and Huff (1995, 8) these can be summarized as "the rise of individual autonomy over traditional community, the rise of secularizing reason over inherited authority, the disengagement of nature from a supernatural worldview, the rise of methodical and institutionalized criticism, the rise of science as both technique and worldview, the rise of historical consciousness and the practice of historical method, and the establishment of…a democratic ethos in public life." Originating in Paris, London, Venice and Edinburgh, the Enlightenment was championed by European luminaries such as Montesquieu (1689-1755), Voltaire (1694-1778), Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794), John Locke (1632-1794) and David Hume (1711-1776) (Withers 2020, 144). These thinkers, each in their own ways, set about the task of "bringing the globe under the sovereignty of science" (Ibid, 140).

While Voltaire contributed his satirization of the Roman Catholic Church to this aim, explorers like George Vancouver (1757-1798) and James Cook (1728-1779) attempted to literally chart the globe (Ibid). Vancouver, Cook and the host of naturalists and illustrators who accompanied them on their various voyages can therefore be credited with developing the three most defining features of modern, empirical geography: realism in description, systematic classification in collection, and comparative method in explanation (Withers 2007, 8). By mapping the globe and bringing its variegated inhabitants under the unifying rubric of "the Science of Man" (Ibid, 3), the field of geography embodied the coloniality at the heart of

Enlightenment thought and practices.[14] Sensationalized reports produced in geography texts of the "natives" encountered on the voyages of European explorers not only captured the imagination of the enlightened peoples of Europe but also worked to disseminate among their leaders "a new set of rhetorical instruments [and] analytic vocabulary" with which to conceptualize, order and dominate the world (Withers 2020, 144).

Insofar as it confronts the colonial underpinnings of human geography, inextricable from its Enlightenment origins, this project's contribution to the field is very much in the vein of those previously offered by feminist and anti-racist geographers like Mona Domosh (2000), Minelle Mahtani (2002, 2004, 2006), Audrey Kobayashi (2002, 2003) and Laura Polido (2002). Despite the valiant efforts of such scholars, "much remains unspoken about how the prevalent whiteness of our institutional policies and practices influence the experiences of [people] of colour in geography" (Mahtani 2006, 22). Indeed, while other disciplines are becoming more racially diverse, geography appears to be becoming more homogenous (Ibid, 23). As the focus on issues pertaining to race, gender, disabilities, class and sexual orientation in geography publications are not being matched by a "commitment to develop anti-racist geographies in our academic corridors of power," many senior geographers of colour are "urging their best students to pursue graduate work in other disciplines, for fear that they will experience and encounter similar forms of racism and sexism" (Ibid, 22-3). My own encounter with geography's "institutional practices of subordination" (Ibid, 21) came after the dawning on me of Objective Irony, when I approached my supervisor about changing my dissertation topic. I explained to him that I wanted to abandon the ethnography of my natal village in favour of examining the twist of fate that led

[14] For a detailed examination of the relationship between "ethnographic ways of knowing" and colonialism, I recommend Kavita Philip (2004). Suffice to say that the Science of Man was never divorced from "systems of documenting and controlling tribal populations' way of knowing and using their environment" (102).

me to assume it as an object of study. I even opened up about the synchronicities that had inspired my idea. But my supervisor, a world-renowned geographer with immeasurable clout, evidently had a great deal of disdain for it. He insisted that I persevere with the originally proposed project; said I was being "self-indulgent"; and issued an ultimatum: fall in line or find someone else to work with.

Intimidated and concerned for my future, my confidence wavered. I tried to convince myself that my supervisor was right, that for now I would be better off doing what I was told and after the PhD I could write whatever I liked. But the discolouration, having gone into remission after I took the decision to write an autoethnography, returned. The signal was loud and clear. The consequences of not doing what I thought was right would be far worse than finding a new supervisor. Which I did. As such my contribution to human geography is twofold: the evocation of the experience of a geographer of colour and attribution of its less than salutary aspects in the discipline's lack of a *Writing Culture* (1994) style critique of representation.[15] Perhaps due to its Enlightenment origins and close connection to empire, geography has clung to the participant-

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[15] In geography there persists a structure that places "regional geography in a subordinate position to the universalist ambitions of systematic geographical studies: the latter [i.e., Economic, Political and Cultural Geography] develop theories and the former gather the data through encyclopedic studies of areas to prove [them]" (Sharp 2019, 835). The outcome of geography's post-World War II quantitative turn, this division of labour has largely insulated the discipline from the impact that contemporary area studies has had on other social sciences, the questions of representation and positionality it transposed to them (Sidaway et al. 2016, 779). Said's (1979) critique of Middle East Area Studies in *Orientalism* first asked these questions of area studies. However, "the small group of regional geographers that existed in the 1980s was not interested in Said's thesis. The Middle East geographer W.B. Fisher claimed in reaction to the growing influence of Orientalism that geography—unlike religion, history, culture, literature and language—would be largely immune to Said's thesis" (Sharp 2019, 839). Not until the First Gulf War (1990-1), the first "full-scale GIS war" (Ibid, 840), was geography forced to engage with *Orientalism* (see Gregory 1994). Even still, what Sidaway (1994, 360) has referred to as the "moribund backwater of geographical studies of the Middle East" did not fully embrace reflexivity until after the 9/11 attacks, when a renewed Middle East regional geography began to draw "extensively from poststructuralist and post-colonial epistemologies emphasizing moral, ethical and political concerns of studying the region" (Sharp 2019, 841; see for example Stewart 2005, Culcasi 2010 and Smith 2011). Generally speaking, though, fear of consignment to geography's margins (Sidaway 2013) continues to limit interest and engagement with the politics of representation, especially as compared with a neighbouring discipline like anthropology. The consequence is a discipline that remains relatively inured to universalist pretension, epistemologically naïve and resistant to experimentation.

observer model of ethnography, to an ideology claiming immediacy of experience. With this work I pile pressure on geographers to re-examine the persistence of such an ideology, and the ways it has worked to keep geography homogenous.

Conceptual Framework

Building on these literatures, I make three concepts central to this study: "acculturative stress" (Rogler et al. 1991) or the antagonism between the spheres of home/family and school/society, the Native Informant and Objective Irony. Acculturative stress is a complication of my assimilation, the largely automatic attenuation of those distinctions I inherited on the basis of being Shia Lebanese (Richard and Nee 2003, 38). I say "automatic" given that I arrived to Canada as a child, just in time for elementary school. The Native Informant or postcolonial intellectual is a person tasked with resisting the urge to leverage their presumed marginality for the advantages of moral and rhetorical authority (Jeyaraj 2003, 66). Congealed in this figure are the problems surrounding the complicity of power and knowledge. Finally, Objective Irony is shorthand for the fate involved in my becoming a Native Informant. It is the irony of my journey in the Canadian classroom, the place where I first learned to resent my distinctiveness, culminating in envy of what I once possessed, "a set of typical characteristics, an identity…a Self" (Day 2000, 206).

Specific Objectives

To the growing body of research on the assimilation of Lebanese-origin youth in Canada I look to contribute an outline of the development in my understanding of acculturative stress, a look at how the meaning of the antagonism between the spheres of home/family and

school/society has changed over time for me. This time-variant approach should help redress prevalent misconceptions regarding the severity of the impact of acculturative stress on the relationship between the first and subsequent generations. Simultaneously, it should redress the misleading association in existing research of heteronomy with the sphere of home/family and individual flourishing with the sphere of school/society. In the last instance I will attempt a response to the challenge of decolonizing myself posed by Objective Irony.

Methodology: Autoethnography

Originally, my dissertation was designed as an ethnography in the Malinowskian (2013, 2017) tradition. I voyaged to Lebanon and set up my tent, so to speak, in the Shia territories of the Dahieh and Biqa'. By way of facilitating my decolonization, the reversal of the effects of my assimilation to Amereeka, my intention was to grasp the Shia Lebanese point of view. I set out to accomplish this through the usual means of participant observation: synoptic charts and tables outlining the framework of the culture, wading through the imponderabilia of daily life and collecting documents which speak to the narratives and myths that inform the mentality of the group (Lamphere 2018, 65). With the dawning of Objective Irony, however, I underwent a crisis of legitimacy and representation that paralleled the one precipitated for an entire generation of anthropologists by the critique posed in *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1984). I was led to "an experience and a moment in time when excluding or obscuring the personal in [my] research felt uncomfortable, even untenable" (Jones, Adams and Ellis 2013, 21).

Consequently, I turned to autoethnography as a means of processing the (psychical and material) events that led to me conducting a Malinowskian study of Shia Lebanese. By shedding the problematic rhetoric of a neutral observer (see Conquergood 1991, Ronai 1995, Denzin and

Lincoln 2000 and Pathak 2010) and embracing vulnerability with purpose (see Behar 1996, Elam 1997 and Caroyln 2004), I found that I could tap into the political potential of ethnographic methodology (Elliott and Culhane 2017; Biehl 2013). For if knowledge is complicit with power, such potential is undoubtedly located in furthering our understanding of the micro, individual level processes of knowledge reception—how someone comes to know what they know and value certain types of knowledge over others (Elliott and Culhane 2017, 4). All this to say that answering the challenges of Objective Irony, its blurring of the difference between methodology and epistemology among them, required a level of reflexivity to which autoethnography is singularly conducive. Autoethnography, conceived broadly as a commitment to reflexivity, is enacted in Chapter 3 through phenomenology and in Chapter 4 through creative nonfiction.

Phenomenology

What exactly does phenomenology have to do with autoethnography? On the face of it, not much. Phenomenology, at least the variant conceived of by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and later advanced by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), is principally concerned with the structures and conditions of direct subjective experience (see Hopp 2020 and Zahavi 2019). Literally it means the "logos of phenomena" or truth/rationale of immediate experience (Sartre 1987, 12). Autoethnography, on the other hand, involves the use of personal narrative to examine and critique cultural experiences (Jones, Adams and Ellis 2013, 22). The admixture in Chapter 3 of phenomenology and autoethnography is in part the outcome of its examination and critique of a cultural experience that rests on the assumption of its immediacy. Additionally, the chapter is phenomenologically oriented in the sense that it unfolds the progressive phases of the development in an individual's understanding or perspective (Kaufmann 1965).

I refer to the phase in which I first discovered the antagonism between the spheres of home/family and school/society as “Prevarication.” It began when I was thirteen, with my desperate attempts to be accepted into the pop-punk music scene at school. Once my parents voiced their objections, I resolved to lead a double life. I continued to do so until I was outed by a friend of my mother and then briefly exiled to Lebanon. The second phase of my understanding, “Detachment,” began later on in high school, when I was fifteen. It was a time in which, as the existing literature accurately predicts, I came to associate the sphere of home/family with heteronomy and the sphere of school/society with individual flourishing and authenticity. “Freedom” is the third phase and it started when I entered graduate school at age twenty-two. It covers the period in which I realized that the individualism of the sphere of school/society cloaked an influence far more peremptory, and indeed far less positive, than that of the sphere of home/family. The fourth and final phase of my understanding of the antagonism between the two spheres, “Objective Irony,” began when I was twenty-eight. It marks the period in which I struggled against the twist of fate that turned marginality into popular culture, a scene like the one which initiated my assimilation. The purpose of Chapter 3, then, is to build toward a sense of the fate wrapped up in Objective Irony.

Creative Nonfiction

Objective Irony asks: Can the efforts of my education play a part in undoing the damage done to the sphere of home/family? Is there any hope at all for reversing my assimilation? As regards the second question, yes, I believe so. I believe that this hope exists in tension with the threat of becoming a Native Informant, meaning that decolonization becomes possible only after I affirm the existence of that threat. Insofar as undoing the damage done to the sphere of home/family is concerned, this means processing the past and tending to the relationship I have

with my parents. As that is a task that comfortably exceeds the limits of this project, Chapter 4 is mostly concerned with redirecting the efforts of my education toward its facilitation. This, in turn, involves affirming the risk of becoming a Native Informant in yet another way.

One of the greatest difficulties I have with decolonization is convincing myself of my motives. Given the value of the commodity that marginality has become, how can I be sure that the idea to return to my roots is really mine? That my attempt to do so will have anything but the opposite effect? The feeling is of a kind with the one I was made to feel as a scene kid after someone I considered to be a poser, an inauthentic posturer, revealed that they liked the same band or artist. Or when an artist that I believed I was uniquely disposed to identifying with proved wildly popular. These experiences were deflating in a way that threatens the coherence of the ego. Colloquially, meaning online, a comparison might be drawn to the idea of something being "cringe." What makes an action or statement cringe is its transparency, its vulgar motivation. A good example would be the now infamous Kendall Jenner Pepsi advertisement (see Whiteout 2018). Its attempt to tap into the currency or "moment" of wokeness, inchoate and artless, is exceedingly cringe. However, as even the most personal motivations, behaviours and actions become excessively general, I find myself wondering how much longer I have before I become completely paralyzed by the fear of being cringe, before I have been cowed into never attempting to "pin myself down" (Varadharajan 1995, 68). Said otherwise, the feeling of Objective Irony is the feeling of being a "latecomer and epigone," harmful because it leads one "into a dangerous mood of irony in regard to [one]self and subsequently into the even more dangerous mood of cynicism: in this mood [one] develops more and more a prudent practical egoism through which the forces of life are paralyzed and at last destroyed" (Nietzsche 1997,

83).[16] In the instance of redirecting the efforts of my education toward undoing the effects of my assimilation, assuming the risk of becoming a Native Informant means learning to resist this feeling. Chapter 4 especially can be read as an exercise in pushing past the fear of being a latecomer and epigone. It takes the form of creative nonfiction because I believe that the most someone can give of themselves is in the realm of art. To make a piece of art is to open oneself up to criticism, to be without the excuse of "it's just for school" or "this isn't really me." Even if the piece ultimately proves to be derivative or in bad taste, the risk is a necessary one. Or rather, that risk is what makes it possible for the piece to be otherwise. The two outcomes exist in tension with one another, a tension that I have tried to portray.

The creative fiction approach of Chapter 4 also addresses many of the concerns that arose out of the critique posed by *Writing Culture* (1984), its insistence on a certain representational tact based in the understanding that "ethnography is artisanal, tied to the worldly work of writing" (6). The suggestion that (auto)ethnography is a translucent rather than transparent method that "relies on writing to convey any sense of knowledge or understanding has three main implications" (Abdallah 2017, 173). First, it implied that language, like the (auto)ethnographer, is not a neutral medium. The words we choose have texture and materiality; their arrangement determines how the subject of writing is perceived (Ibid, 172). Second, if (auto)ethnography is meant to be a representation of experience, then the "descriptive power of evocation" takes precedence over accepted notions of methodological neutrality (Ibid, 173). Or, given that writing itself is what lends (auto)ethnographic accounts any relevance, it may be necessary to look to alternative forms of writing in order to enhance technique (Ibid, 172).

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[16] To the extent that the intersection of migration and my stage of development led me to rehearse in a single lifetime "the continuity from the modern interrogation of premodern beliefs to the radical questioning of bourgeois beliefs and values" (Bernstein 2001, 100), Nietzsche and his nihilism appear to be a terminus terminal.

According to Kirin Narayan (1999), (auto)ethnographers' flirtations with creative nonfiction in particular can be traced back farther than the 1980s. Indeed, Oliver La Farge's *Laughing Boy* (1929), a novel drawing on the ethnography of the Navajo he wrote for his master's thesis at Harvard, won a Pulitzer Prize over half a century earlier. Of course, if an (auto)ethnography verges too closely on fiction it is liable "to lose clarity, so that readers have to puzzle along trying to guess what is the point of the text and how likely such events would be to happen" and, obversely, "for fiction the danger of merging with ethnography is to lose the power of a good story in favor of becoming a forum for mechanically transmitting facts" (Narayan 1999, 143-4). That being said, if what Objective Irony reveals is "the persistence [for me] of an ideology claiming transparency of representation and immediacy of experience," then it is crucial that I move beyond the usual participant-observation model and, to a certain extent, "assume that academic and literary genres interpenetrate" (Clifford and Marcus 1986, 2).

Chapter 4, in sum, mediates the contradiction within my attempt to redirect the efforts of my education, the one between personal and scientific authority, between personal narrative and objectifying description, by introducing myself as a character in a story (Pratt 1986, 32). With Zolo the "rhetoric of experienced objectivity yields to that of the…ironic self-portrait" (Clifford and Marcus 1984, 14). The story is about the blemish above Zolo's brow, the clumsy orientation of his life around its growing demands. It unfurls over three Dialogues and three Flashbacks. Taking to heart Kojeve's (1969, 191) assessment of dialogue as the most elemental way in which people expose themselves to negation, the "Dialogues" are recreations from memory of conversations I have had that I consider especially informative. They appear as dramatized interchanges between Zolo and the Socratic figures in his life, people whose examples of "ethical discourse" he most respects (Redfield 2017). Like the possibility of being shattered, they fill our

protagonist with hope as well as apprehension and dread. The three "Flashbacks" are constructed from interviews conducted with members of my family and tribe regarding the series of events leading to the *hijra*[17] (emigration) of my parents and me. They are returns of a repressed autochthony. As explained by Durrant (2004, 9),

> [p]sychoanalysis, with its commitment to the well-being of the subject, encourages us to exorcise our ghosts, to come to terms with loss and move on. Deconstruction, with its commitment to the other, to that which 'unhinges' the subject, urges us to learn to live with ghosts. Postcolonial narrative, which addresses the individual reader both in his or her singularity and as a member of wider communities, is caught between these two commitments: its transformation of the past into a narrative is simultaneously an attempt to summon the dead and to lay them to rest.

By raising the dead required for him to lay his discolouration to rest (Ward 2013, 172), the Flashbacks to 1975, 1982 and 1993 mark a "break" (Coulthard and Rodriguez 2016) in Zolo's subjection.

Method

I have approached this research project as more of a DJ than an orchestra conductor, with an "idea of theory as a collection, as opposed to a symphonic whole, evocative and useful" (Hage 2016, 223). For one, I wanted to avoid treating theory "as a church or football team" (Ibid). Meaning, theory can be evaluated only in relation to the ends it is deployed. Second, I wanted to avoid the impression that I understand my work as exhausting in any way the theories which help me to understand and describe my experience. Despite the dialectical progression of Chapter 3 especially, I would instead like to emphasize my intention to live up to the "ethic of critical respect" described by Ghassan Hage (Ibid). Above all, I respect the labour of those theorists

[17] The term *hijra* can be translated as emigration but in a historic sense it refers to the particular emigration of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) from Mecca to Medina in the year 622. The Prophet's move to Medina marks the beginning of the Islamic or *hijrī* calendar. Among certain modern Islamist groups hijra also connotes a breaking off of relations with non-believers (Raven 2018).

from whom I have borrowed tools, even (and especially) when critical of them. Third, I need to embrace experimentation in order to think through and ideate my experience while simultaneously unthinking established and hegemonic mental maps. A curatorial approach like the one I have chosen facilitates that. In addition to theory, then, my "mix" includes interviews, fieldwork and history.

Materials

I conducted and taped a dozen interviews in summer 2016 and another dozen in spring 2018 with members of my immediate and extended family in London, ON and Lebanon. Lasting between forty-five minutes and two hours, the semi-structured interviews prompted respondents to reflect on their experiences of important events, for themselves personally, our tribe and Lebanon (for sample questions see Appendix A). The interviews were conducted primarily in Arabic although sometimes in combination with English and then translated into English by the interviewer. The respondents ranged in age from twenty-four to eighty and were of both genders. They were all born in Lebanon and most had lived a part of their lives during the Civil War. My intent was to elicit a family history of the events relating to that conflict, the migration it led to and the post-War clientelism or *muhassasa* (see Harb and Leenders 2005, 185). This history was then used to verify and contextualize the reminisces appearing in Chapter 3. It appears as well in the form of dialogue and flashback in Chapter 4. Additionally, I have supplemented this family history with authoritative scholarly accounts throughout.

Ethics and Challenges

An important element of what drove me away from the sphere of home/family as an adolescent was my concern for justice and social transformation. That same concern is now

driving me back. At the core of this dissertation, then, is the challenge of leading an ethical existence. Simultaneously, it faces the usual challenges posed to the enterprise of ethnography, those relating to matters of transparency, the study population, scholarly expectations, reciprocity, consent and confidentiality (Maddison 2005, 82).

Transparency

The purpose of this study is to explain and explore the ethical impasse of Objective Irony. Communicating this in a straightforward way to all those relevant parties affected by the research was not always easy. My colleagues and supervisors in Canada, familiar as they are with the requisite intellectual trends, were amenable to the idea, even when predisposed to disagree with its focus on the complete mediation of subjective experience. Even if they were inclined to contest its premise, the value of such a study was easily grasped by them. This was less so the case with members of my family. To them I translated my study more simply as an assessment of the possibility of undoing the effects on me of a “Westernizing” influence. I also shared my representations of them and solicited their feedback. When I was asked to remove certain details, I did so.

Study Population

As this is an autoethnography, my primary ethical responsibility is the safety, dignity and privacy of the “intimate others who are characters in [my] stories” (Ellis 2007, 4). Given the importance to them of it, I have done my best to treat their faith with the respect and reverence it commands. Because faith and politics intersect in indomitable ways in Lebanon, I have also done my best to be politically sensitive, to remain open to their perspectives and allegiances. Where this gets tricky is with the religious and political association of my tribe to Hizballah, an organization that is categorized as a terrorist organization by Canada, the US, and the EU (Bell,

Stewart. “Canada pushed EU to add Hezbollah to list of banned terrorist organizations, official says.” *National Post*, July 25, 2013). Such associations also make details like names and locations especially sensitive. Where possible, this study has used aliases, composite characters and alternate locations. Participants were additionally informed that, despite my best efforts, I could not guarantee their anonymity. Signed consent was attained during the project design phase and continual or “rolling” verbal consent throughout the research and writing phases. I made myself available for questions and comments for the duration of the project and beyond.

Reciprocity

The chances of my relatives accepting “material assistance” for their participation in my study were never very good. It was actually quite rude of me to even offer. So far as reciprocity is concerned, all my relatives have ever really wanted is for me to return to Lebanon, take a bride from the Biqa’ and buy a farm. In lieu of all this, the prospect of two extended periods of field work was welcomed. My family and I are most grateful for the opportunity afforded by this occasion to spend time together in Lebanon.

Limitations of the Study

As a method of research, the value of autoethnography has been frequently called into question (see Atkinson 1997 and Coffey 1999). It has been critiqued as “self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective and individualized” (Méndez 2013, 283). Rather than “offering logical claims supported by empirical data” (Ibid, 284), autoethnography is said to be mired in “stories” of the past (Ellis and Bochner 2000), stories which may or may not be true. Even scholars more sympathetic to tackling the “politics of positionality” (Madison 2005) and taking “responsibility for their subjective lenses” (Boylorn and Orbe 2014, 15) have admitted to being “at a loss to say how much emotion is bearable within academic settings” (Behar 1996, 24). Like art,

autoethnography is high stakes. “The Worst that can happen in an invulnerable text is that it will be boring. But when an author has made herself or himself vulnerable, the stakes are higher: a boring self-revelation, one that fails to move the reader, is more than embarrassing; it is humiliating…Efforts at self-revelation flop not because the personal voice has been used, but because it has been poorly used” (Ibid, 21-2). One can draw inspiration from the likes of Ghassan Hage (2009, 2013), Dara Culhane and Denielle Elliott (2017), Carolyn Ellis (1999, 2007, 2010, 2016), Johnny Saldaña (1998, 2005, 2016) and Norman Denzin (2014), yes, but still—how can one be sure that their work is anywhere near as good? The difficulty inherent to revealing oneself—and all the guile and skill that doing so requires—combined with the risks of failing, is for me a far greater limitation than those lamented by autoethnography’s more epistemologically naïve critics. At the same time this risk, great as it is, is what makes autoethnography worth doing. The risk is worth taking because the alternative is enervation, shrinking from the challenge. And if I have any hope of undoing the effects of my assimilation, I must learn to transcend that shrinking feeling.

In addition to the methodological limitations of this study are those deriving from my situated personhood, my being middle-class, straight and a man. I apologize in advance for any unintended oversights of my consequent privilege. In that sense the greatest advantage of autoethnography is the extent to which it invites criticism, the wealth of personal data that it creates for examination. My hope is very much that Lebanese-origin youth (and scholars) with different attributes will see the pseudo-developmental model of my own assimilation to Canada as an opportunity to reflect on theirs. If that reflection leads them to want to criticize or contradict any or all of my argument, then all the better.

Conclusion

In this introductory chapter I have introduced the thesis of this dissertation, situated it within the fields of research it addresses itself to, laid out the methodology and described some of the largest challenges that lie ahead. In the following chapter I look to continue the work of qualifying my experience. I look to explain exactly what kind of Lebanese-origin youth I am.

Chapter 2: Background

With this chapter I begin the work of qualifying my experience. A good habit to keep in general but perhaps especially so in this instance, given the ideological heft of who and what counts as "Lebanese." As I illustrate below with respect to the existing literature, the consequences of assuming "Lebanese" as a category of representation are indeed manifold. Following a brief discussion of these consequences I move to qualify my Lebaneseness by admitting membership to the *hala al-islamiyya* (*hala* hereafter). This involves defining the *hala* as well as the historical formations that inform the depth of attachment to it that a majority of pious Shia Lebanese demonstrate (Harb and Leenders 2005, 192).

"Lebanese-Origin Youth"

With one important exception, the existing literature on the assimilation of Lebanese-origin youth into Canada is undiscerning with regard to Lebanese confessionalism. We hear of "Lebanese-origin youth," the "Lebanese diaspora" and "Lebanese culture" without much attention being paid to the contested nature of the category "Lebanese." Abdelhady's contribution is most egregious in this regard. Time and again one encounters sweeping generalizations like "Lebanese immigrants favor social relationships that are based on shared lifestyles and dispositions instead of traditional attachments that are based on ethnicity" and "Lebanese immigrants understand experiences of fragmentation, homelessness, injustice, and displacement as universal conditions that only strengthen their ability to avail themselves of several identities" (2011, 92, 189). Without addressing, for example, how being Druze or Sunni might impact a Lebanese immigrant's experience of diaspora, one narrative subsumes all others

in Abdelhady's analysis. This is especially evident in her treatment of the Montreal diaspora, centered exclusively around Maronite interviewees. Abdelhady (2011, 75) explains how she met her first respondent, Michel, through Lebanese friends of hers. Michel subsequently connected her to his own circle of friends. While this sort of snowball sampling is commonplace, why did Abdelhady not see the sense in interviewing Lebanese of different backgrounds in addition to Michel and his friends from the upscale neighbourhood of Le Plateau? Why was Montreal, the other of the two Canadian cities where the vast majority of Lebanese immigrants reside, chosen over Toronto (Profiles of Ethnic Communities in Canada 2001)? Montreal, after all, is something of a Maronite enclave (Abdelhady 2011, 8). This, of course, would be fine if Abdelhady's aim was to portray a Maronite-Lebanese experience of diaspora. Instead, she insists on the generality of a "Lebanese" diaspora without doing the work to elucidate and then synthesize the experiences of Lebanon's various groups. Given the diversity of Lebanon's national landscape (see Figure 2), Abdelhady's is a most puzzling oversight.

The unfortunate outcome is the production of an image of a quintessential Lebanese diaspora that corresponds with the old nationalist portrayal of the quintessential Lebanese. For example, Michel and his friends emphasize to her "their Phoenician heritage and the contributions of their ancient ancestors to world civilizations" (Ibid, 46). This does nothing to deter Abdelhady (Ibid, 124) from proclaiming that Lebanese immigrants eschew ethnic attachments for relationships "shaped by a belief in universal equality, emancipation, social justice, and individual rights." Indeed, it is unclear if Abdelhady is at all aware that the assumption of Phoenician heritage (Kaufman 2001) was a prominent, spurious motif among far-right Civil War era Maronite militias. A trope used to reduce "the Arabs"— Lebanese Shia, Sunni and Druze—to intruders of Lebanon (Hage 1996). Without any mention of this sordid

strategy, Abdelhady (2011, 53) explains her interviewees' Phoenician identification as a negotiation of "structural relations of power and inequality…at a time when being Arab evokes a wide range of negative stereotypes."



Figure 1: Map of Lebanon
(Source: Eric Leinberger, UBC Geography Dpt. Cartographer)

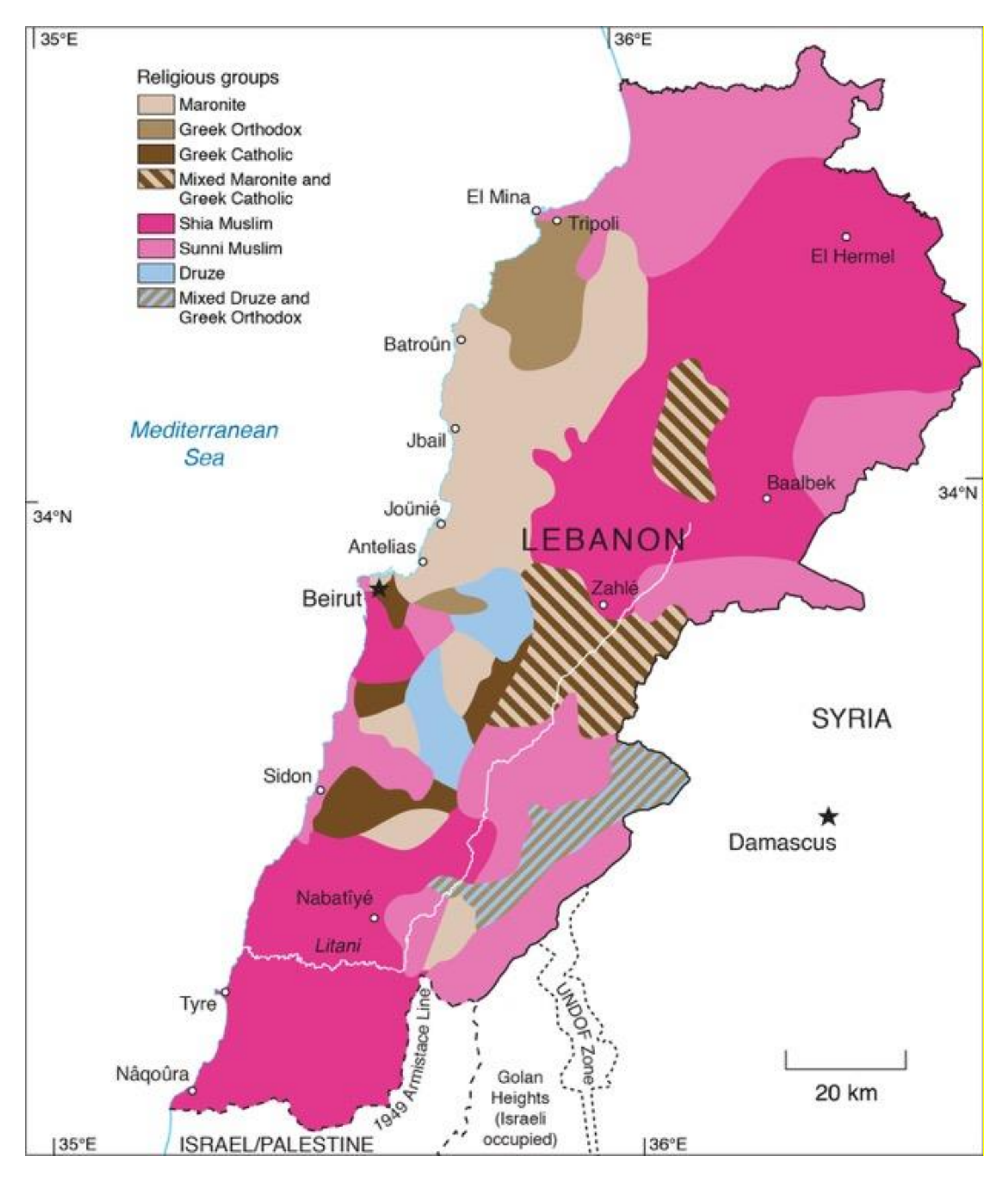


Figure 2: Religious Divides in Lebanon
(Source: Eric Leinberger, UBC Geography Dpt. Cartographer)

Throughout the course of her interviews, in Montreal and beyond, Abdelhady (Ibid, 115) continually encounters this admixture of cosmopolitanism, a stated desire to move "beyond

sectarian divisions," and "specifically anti-Muslim and Anti-Syrian (and simultaneously anti-Arab) views." And yet the question goes wanting: Might a Westward disposition be part and parcel of the nationalist Maronite narrative? Might the eschewal of ethnic attachments, in and of itself, be an expression of such attachments? Of an attitude that was not adopted in diaspora but exported from Lebanon? What I and surely many others would see as thinly veiled chauvinism does nothing to temper Abdelhady's (Ibid, 194) proclamation that "Lebanese immigrants demonstrate that cosmopolitanism is a type of global consciousness."[18]

A similar theme runs through Tastsoglou and Petrinioti's (2011) study of multiculturalism and the lived experience of second-generation Lebanese immigrants in Halifax. This time, however, the authors are upfront about their work's bias. "Our participants," they clarify, "used the term 'Lebanese'…to refer exclusively to their own group of Christian Lebanese, and in particular, their own narrower Christian denominations of Maronite and Orthodox Christians" (Ibid, 188). Regardless, they do not reckon with the possibility that the "fluidity of their [respondents'] hybridity" might be explained as much by their background as "the transition to the second generation" (Ibid, 193). Indeed, despite recognizing how "interesting" it would be "to examine how this group of Christian Lebanese-origin youth might compare with Muslim Lebanese youth in that regard," Tastsoglou and Petrinioti (Ibid) are nevertheless content to take the experience conveyed by their respondents as evidence of "the

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[18] The only Sunni interviewed by Abdelhady (2011, 28) was an "established middle-class professional" in Paris named Nadia who too was eager to highlight that "Lebanese, in France, are often not considered to be Arabs, or at least not those who are seen as the problem." Her two Shia respondents, Ali and Fares, worked together at "an ethnic restaurant" in one of "Paris's immigrant neighborhoods [that] was less successful than the more famous Lebanese restaurants in wealthy and tourist neighborhoods" (Ibid, 56). They in turn presented an alternative narrative, asserting that their identification had not been changed by the time they had spent in Paris, that they remained proud of their religious identities and preferred living in an Arab neighbourhood where they remained in close proximity to other Shias (Ibid). Without much care at all, Abdelhady (Ibid) explains away their stance as a consequence of their "marginalized position."

situational character of [Lebanese] identity itself." For their part, S. and B. Abu-Laban (1999, 148) find that those among their respondents "who identify more with being Canadian than Arab tend to be Christian rather than Muslim youth." Unfortunately, due to the limitations of the survey, it remains unclear if the respondents who preferred to identify as "Arab" might still prefer identifying as either "Sunni" or "Shia." In his contribution to the same volume, Hayani (1999, 295, 302) likewise suggests "Christians [may] find it easier to acculturate to a 'Christian' society" and "the balance between ethnic maintenance on the one hand and participation in the host society on the other is struck differently by various individuals and subgroups." Again, though, the piece concludes on a conciliatory note. On the whole, we are told, "Arab Canadians have sought an integrationist mode of acculturation" (Ibid, 302). It is as if the Abu-Labans and Hayani, out of concern for fueling anti-immigrant sentiment, felt obliged to comfort their majoritarian Canadian readers, to reassure them about the intentions of "the strangers within our gates" (Day 2000, 127).[19]

The important exception I noted at the outset of the chapter is the contribution of May Al-Fartousi (2016). Here we find no allusions to a "Lebanese" diaspora, people or culture. Al-Fartousi's (Ibid, 195) program of research is concerned specifically with experiences in the Canadian public school system of young *hijab* wearing Shia girls, their difficulties negotiating their identity in relation to the hegemony of the dominant group. Consequently, her work is much less celebratory of "hybridity" (Tastsoglou and Petrinioti 2011, 182) and "cosmopolitanism" (Abdelhady 2011, 129). Remarking that "representations of Muslims in textbooks demonstrates the dominance of colonizer discourses and the inferiority of depictions

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[19] J.S. Woodsworth's *Strangers Within our Gates* (1907) was among the first and most popular alarms raised regarding non-European immigration to Canada. Woodsworth later served as an MP from 1921 to his death in 1942.

related to Muslim culture," Al-Fartousi (2016, 207) is the only contributor to the existing literature who critically examines the commonplace portrayal of multiculturalism as an overcoming of Canada's colonial history (see Day 2000 or Kamboureli 2000). By unearthing a connection between the discourse of multiculturalism and the "racist and religious comments and beliefs that diminished [her] daughter's self-esteem and confidence," Al-Fartousi (Ibid 193) highlights at least one reason why a Shia Lebanese immigrant might not only decide to uphold their values but even submit them as a challenge to those that dominate.

Of all the representations of the experience of "Lebanese origin-youth" in Canada, Al-Fartousi's is undoubtedly the one that most closely approximates my own. Unsurprisingly, we belong to the same community. And so, rather than contribute another set of generalizations that subsume contradictory experiences, I have chosen to follow Al-Faroutsi's example and be specific. My contribution to the existing literature concerns the children of immigrants like her who arrived to Canada from a place that has been referred to as Lebanon's "Islamic sphere" (Harb and Leenders 2005), "Islamic milieu" (Harb and Deeb 2011) and "resistance society" (Harb 2007). In short, the *hala al-islamiyya*. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to a careful delineation of the *hala*, what exactly it is as well as how it came to be "the norm for a majority" of Shia Lebanese (Harb and Leenders 2005, 192).

The *hala*

In order to define the *hala* in a meaningful way I must first provide a (condensed) history of the process that produced it: "a multi-stranded Shi'i mobilization that began in the 1970s, which included a number of major actors with varying political perspectives, in terms of both

their methods and their ideologies" (Harb and Deeb 2011, 12).[20] In particular I will focus on three critical junctures of this "transformation," which renowned anthropologist Augustus Richard Norton (1987, 10) described as the Civil War's most dramatic: the rise of the *mahrumin* (dispossessed) movement (1969-1975); the splintering of Islamic AMAL from AMAL (1982-3); and the War of the Camps (1985-7) between the two factions. It is my hope that a quick overview of these historical events will help to underscore the depth of the attachment over time to the *hala*.

***mahrumin* Movement**

The Shia of Lebanon are primarily located in the Biqa' and Southern Province. The former, the plural of the Arabic *buqaah* or "place with stagnant water," is a

> central highland between the Lebanon Mountains and the Anti-Lebanon Mountains. Its middle section spreads out more than its two extremities. Geologically, the Biqa' is the medial part of a depression that extends north to the western bend of the Orontes River in Syria and south to Jordan through Al Arabah to the Gulf of Aqaba, the eastern arm of the Red Sea. (Abukhalil 1989, 44)

Once a Roman granary, the Biqa' is where much of Lebanon's arable land lies. Its Shia are said to be descendants of Mount Lebanon's Hamada "emirate," exiled to the valley on the other side of the range by Druze Emirs in 1763 (Stefan Winter 2010, 58; see also Simon Haddad 2002, 319).[21] After cultivating ties of kinship and social alliance through intermarriage, members of each family cluster subsequently "endorsed the informal authority of a senior leader or 'chief' from among its wealthier and more influential families" (Abisaab and Abisaab 2014, 5; see also

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[20] For a detailed and authoritative English language account of this mobilization see Abisaab and Abisaab (2014).

[21] From 1641 to 1685 the Shia Hamadas "controlled a territory that stretched from Safita in modern-day Syria to the Futuh district in the mountains above Jbail" (Winter 2010, 58). The short-lived presence of the Hamadas in Mt. Lebanon, the Maronite heartland, has "consistently been written out of the Lebanese national narrative" as an Iranian conquest later quelled by a "nationalist uprising," a claim which once again highlights the "ideological stakes of Lebanese historiography" (Ibid, 60).

Emyrs Peters 1963, 1972). These chiefs amassed vast lands which they shared, unequally, with members of their cluster. To the extent that the poor peasant families “felt thankful to the chief as both a family figure and a landowner” the Shia of Biqa’ came to be understood as organized into tribes, owing in other words to a “collective sense of access to the land and its produce” and not “a seminomadic or pastoral life pattern” (Ibid). In the Southern Province, also an agricultural hub, peasants instead rented from landowners unrelated to them. Much like their co-religionists in the east, however, they were “stricken by poverty and neglected by the central government” (Abukhalil 1989, 62). According to statistics from a 1974 Lebanese government report cited by Hasan Sharif (1978, 201), outside of its two largest towns (Sidon and Tyre), the Southern Province had the fewest paved roads per person and per acre. Running water, electricity, sewage facilities, health care and intermediate schools were furthermore all but inaccessible. In addition, from 1970 onward the Southern Province became the launchpad of the Palestinian Liberation Organization’s (PLO) operations.[22] This left its villagers exposed to Israeli reprisals which, as Fisk (2001, 94) notes, were “usually against civilian targets and always with results quite out of proportion to the original Palestinian attack. Thus, for example, when Palestinian rocket fire and a mine explosion had killed two civilians and two soldiers [in 1979], the Israelis shelled the town of Hasbaya, killing forty-eight people and wounding another forty-five.”

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[22] In the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and Jordan’s subsequent loss of administrative control over the West Bank, the PLO, established in 1964 and supported by Egyptian President Nasser, became the rancorous voice of the substantial population of Palestinian refugees in Hussein’s Hashemite kingdom. A rivalry ensued between the King of Jordan and the PLO over the right to represent the Palestinian cause (King Hussein wanted to establish peace with Israel and the return to pre-1967 borders while the PLO demanded the liberation of Palestine tout court) that culminated in the mobilization of the Jordanian army against the *fedayeen* (PLO guerrillas). Following a series of assaults known collectively as Black September the PLO was expelled from Jordan (Barari 2008, 233; see also Dobson 1974, Frangi 1983, Becker 1984, Brynen 1990, and Rubin 1994). The organization subsequently re-established its operation in Lebanon (Cooley 1973).

The reprisals, much more than the lack of services, are what convinced many at the time to relocate from the Southern Province to Beirut. Or to the Dahieh more specifically, the southern suburbs which Shia from the Biqa', as a consequence of a lack of agrarian reform exacerbated by a population boom, had been migrating to since the early 1950s (Abisaab and Abisaab 2014, 62-3). Far from Beirut's famous boardwalk, Shia from both the Biqa' and Southern province were consigned to "the misery belt" as the Dahieh was then known (Norton 1987, 37). By 1971 (Ibid, 108) nearly half of all Shia dwelled in its swollen "warrens of poverty and deprivation" (Fisk 2001, 96).[23] Without representation among the tribal chieftains (the *zouma*), they struggled to extract goods and services from a thoroughly clientelist state (Fisk 2001, 56-7).[24] Limited to either unemployment or low wage service sector positions, the recently urbanized Shia youth became especially prone to the intellectual trends of the era. Indeed, "[p]arents fought with their children over their political affiliations and siblings became divided over their support for Communist, Syrian nationalist, Arabist, or Islamist ideas" (Abisaab and Abisaab 2017, 128-9). One man, however, was best able to harness this brewing "maelstrom," to tap into the "tremendous dynamism in labour protests as well as leftist and nationalist movements" (Abisaab 2015, 142).

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[23] As the last census was carried out in 1932 the exact population figures of Lebanon are unknown (see Maktabi 1999). The main deterrent for another census is the sensitivity of religious balance in government; if a new census were to reveal figures that are wildly discrepant from what was reported 89 years ago a potentially violent shadow would be cast over a consociational system currently awarding the Presidency to Maronites, the Prime Ministership to the Sunni and Speaker of the House to Shia.

[24] Material resources commanded by the state are distributed horizontally between the *zuoma'* who then distribute them vertically through various patronage networks to members of their confession (see Hamzeh 2001).



Figure 3: Southern Province
(Source: Personal library)



Figure 4: The Biqa' Valley
Facing east from a Zahle rooftop toward the Anti-Lebanon Mountains
(Source: Personal library)



Figure 5: Dahieh
(Source: Personal library)

Born in the holy city of Qom, Iran in 1928, Imam Musa al-Sadr came to Lebanon in 1958 to assume the post of highest-ranking Shia official from his recently deceased cousin, Sayyid Abdul Hussein Sharaf al Din (1872-1975) (Ajami 1986, 31). Sadr hailed from one of the most prestigious clerical families descending from the seventh of the twelve Shia Imams, Imam Musa al-Kazam (d. 799) (Ibid).[25] Having assessed the state of the people he was meant to lead spiritually, Sadr quickly became their advocate as well. He clamored for vocational schools and clinics, civil service appointments for Shia and a larger share of the national budget for Shia municipalities and villages (Ibid, 86). In order to overcome the resistance of the Lebanese state and advance the station of Shia in Lebanon, Sadr realized they needed to be "led… into a social

[25] Sadr's arrival in Lebanon marked the reversal of a centuries long traffic between the Shia enclave north of the Galilee and Iran. Following the imposition of Shiism as a state religion by the Safavid dynasty in the sixteenth century, many clerics from modern day Lebanon were exported to Iran to help establish the faith (Ajami 1986).

collectivity pursuing strategic goals" (Halawi 1992, 128). Unfortunately, the Shia lacked the "voluntary associations and charities" of the Sunni community as well as the "clannishness and communal solidarity" of the Druze (Ajami 1986, 99). So, Sadr set about creating his own platforms, an institutional framework for Shia. For financial support he turned to wealthy Shia living abroad, men working in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula (Ibid, 98). A small cadre of "*nouveaux riches*" described as having had a "Darwinistic, harsh view of social life" and great resentment for being "pushed off the land to remote places" (Ibid, 99), Sadr's decision to seek them out was no simple one. The legend of his charisma may well have begun with successful visits to Nigeria, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone.[26]

Within a decade of his arrival Sadr had gained enough financial backing from wealthy Shia emigres as well as cachet with the Lebanese government to establish the Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council of Lebanon (Abisaab 2015, 147). With the Council, the first of its kind, the Shia gained an official interface with the Lebanese state. Since religious institutions in Lebanon preside over matters of personal-status law in Lebanon—marriage, divorce and inheritance—Sadr now spoke on behalf of "both family and sect" (Ibid).[27] As such, the establishment of the Council was "not a small event" (Ibid). "For many, it embodied the necessary bridge to the state and hopes of social betterment through sectarian bargaining and sustained institutional pressure"

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[26] Ghassan Tueni, Lebanese Greek Orthodox journalist and elder statesman, had this to say about Sadr's charisma: "His credibility was never in question, in spite of the rumors concerning his origins and his relations with Damascus. [He was] tall, very tall to the point of seeming to soar above the often-frenzied crowds that his presence drew together. His black turban tilted back with a slight negligence. His enemies seemed charmed by his enigmatic and benevolent smile, whereas to his friends, his bearded face always reflected a profound melancholy. And his hands gave the impression of gathering up his floating robe, the *abaya* in which he wrapped himself, as if he were preparing to step out of some antique miniature. Even when he exhorted the masses, his words were calm and sybline, like an oracle of love and hope, punctuated with the mysterious accents of a mystic wisdom that appealed as much to reason as to the heart" (in Halawi 1992, 127).

[27] The words "sect" and "sectarianism," despite their prevalent usage in research concerning Lebanon, often carry a negative connotation. As such I have, where possible, opted for "confession" or "religious group."

(Ibid). Since as early as 1959, when he delivered a speech to The Lebanese Forum, a chic Beiruti speaker series that Shia clerics were not typically invited to participate in, Sadr had outlined a program of piecemeal reform and the integration of Shia into Lebanon's existing political structure (Halawi 1992, 134). He continued to pursue a reformist agenda until 1974, when the looming war brought home to him that no matter how much he tried to "dispel Christian anxieties regarding *'al-'imlaq al-shi'I'* (the Shia Giant)," the established elements of government would not sanction any major concessions (Ibid). And so, Sadr found himself in need of a different platform from which to pursue a program of outward opposition to the state. He found himself in a position to "benefit from a Shia culture of dissent and leftist protest" that he had previously opposed (Abisaab and Abisaab 2014, xix).[28]

By 1974 the presence of the PLO had polarized politics in Lebanon and helped bring its constitutive inequalities to bear (see Fisk 2001, 78). There had been widespread pro-Palestinian street demonstrations; popular uprisings against "national entrepreneurial elites"; an insurrection against the military; and the convening of a Congress for Tobacco Growers demanding, among other things, "governmental protection of the Lebanese cigarette industry" (Abisaab 2015, 142-3). In all these incidents Shia had been prominent participants (Ibid, 142). And so, despite belonging to a relatively conservative generation of Iranian seminarians that was unwilling to

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[28] Beyond its articulation "through legal-moral obligations and rituals of worship," the emergent consciousness of Shia Lebanese in the twentieth century cannot be comprehended without an appreciation for the impression made on it by various labour movements (Abisaab and Abisaab 2014, xxx-xxxi). In 1936, when the French colonial administration imposed a tobacco monopoly, many seminarians in the Southern Province were as adversely affected as the peasants and farmers. Together they all rallied around Communist Party leader Yusuf Yazbik's calls for "communalizing the land through revolutionary struggle…[the abolishment of] the privileges of foreign companies and cancelling the debts that the French imposed on Lebanese" (Ibid, 52). A generation of *talaba* like Sheikh Jawad Mughniyya subsequently rose to prominence by challenging the secularism of Marxian doxa while accepting with great fervor its critique of capitalism, going so far as "sharing the leftist doubts about the uprightness of certain clerics whom he described as 'reactionary' and self-serving" (Ibid, 64). In the seminary of Najaf young *talaba* like Mughniyya "enriched the intellectual landscape" by pressuring senior seminarians who otherwise feared for their own traditional authority to contend with popular anti-state sentiment (Ibid). So much so that the saying *shi'i-shuyu'i* (Shia, therefore Communist) entered popular parlance (Ibid, 56).

look beyond the secularist tendencies of Marxism, Sadr risked his clerical authority by—at least provisionally—allying his new *mahrumin* (dispossessed) movement with organizations like the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, the Organization of Communist Action and the Lebanese Communist Party (Abisaab and Abisaab 2014, xviii). Indeed, according to Rula Abisaab (2015, 143), "[n]o movement or clerical leader could muster a wide-based following without co-opting features of [the] leftist Shi'i culture." Announced on 25 May 1974 as a peaceful movement for the "greater representation of Shi'is in the state *and an end to their economic deprivation*," the *mahrumin* movement quickly "spread nationwide" and became a "defining moment in Lebanese history" (Ibid, 142; emphasis added). With "fiery oratory," Sadr "harnessed the lower classes' discontent and power and tied them to sectarian deprivation" (Ibid, 142-3). To this end, Sadr benefited from his uneasy alliance with leftist elements, protosocialist sheikhs who decades earlier had begun the work of bestowing "religious conceptions of sacrifice and redemption offered by the Karbala event" with the powerful contemporaneity of Marxist notions of justice and dialectical history (2014, xxvii).[29]

Commemorated annually during '*aushura*,[30] the Battle of Karbala (680) in Iraq marks the nadir of Shia-Sunna relations: the massacre of Imam Hoseyn and seventy members of his family by the Umayyad caliph Yazid (Aghaie 2004, 7). Given the significance of the so-called "Karbala paradigm" to the development of the *hala,* I believe it is worth relaying at some length a commonly accepted narrative of the battle:

> Yazid is portrayed as having been politically oppressive and morally corrupt…Hoseyn (in Medina) received several letters from the caliph's subjects in southern Iraq asking him

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[29] See also, for example, Michael Fischer (1980), Michael Gilsenan (2000), Marie Hegland (1983), Robert Fisk (2001), Lara Deeb (2006), Rola El-Husseini (2010), A.N. Hamzeh (2004), Majed Halawi (1992), C.S. Hamieh and R. MacGinty (2010), Mona Harb (2007) and Mona Harb and Mona Fawa (2010).
[30] '*ashura*, the tenth day of Moharram or the first month of the Islamic calendar, is a day of mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hosayn (Ayoub 1987).

> to travel to Iraq in order to lead them in an uprising against Yazid. After sending scouts to assess the situation in southern Iraq, Hoseyn and a number of his close relatives left the Hijaz, in Western Arabiam, and began the trip to Iraq. In southern Iraq in a desert named Karbala, located near the Euphrates river, the caravan was surrounded by an overwhelmingly large army sent by Yazid. A standoff ensued because Hoseyn refused to give an oath of allegiance (*bey'at*) to Yazid. At the end of the ten days of waiting, negotiating, and occasionally fighting, a final battle took place, in which Hoseyn and all of his adult male relatives and supporters were killed in a brutal fashion. The survivors, consisting of women and children, together with Hoseyn's son Ali Zeyn al-Abedin (d. 712-3), who was too ill to take part in the fighting, were then taken captive and transported, along with the heads of the martyrs, which had been placed on spears, to Yazid's court in Damascus. Along the way they were exhibited in chains in the public markets of the cities through which they passed and a series of unpleasant incidents occurred, as a result of which Hoseyn's relatives, especially his sister Zeynab and his son Zeyn al-Abedin, publicly condemned Yazid for his cruelty toward the descendants of the Prophet Mohammad. In this story, Yazid represents the ultimate impious, tyrannical villain. His supporters, like Shemr, the soldier represented as being the one who actually killed Hoseyn, are also portrayed mostly as being immoral, worldly, and cruel. Hoseyn and his supporters, such as Abbas, his sons Ali Asghar and Ali Akbar, the young bridegroom Qasem…are represented by Shi'is as symbols of courage, piety, and truth. These men are depicted as courageous warriors who fought for the sake of God and divine justice and willingly gave up their lives as martyrs. The women and girls, in particular Zeynab, serve as symbols of the ideal of women supporting their male relative, suffering the indignation of captivity with dignity, educating and preparing their sons to follow the path of Hoseyn, willingly sacrificing their male loved ones to martyrdom, and serving as spokespersons for the cause after the men were martyred. (Aghaie 2004, 8-9)

In a speech given on the occasion of *'ashura* during the year of the *mahrumin* movement's establishment, Sadr told his audience that

> a great sacrifice was needed to shake consciences and stir feelings. The event of Karbala was that sacrifice. Imam Hussain put his family, his force, and even his life, in the balance over against tyranny and corruption. Then the Islamic world burst forth with this unprecedented act of his, this revolution. This revolution did not die in the sands of Karbala, it flowed into the life stream of the Islamic world, and passed from generation to generation, even to our day**.** It is a deposit placed in our hands so that we may profit from it, that we draw out from it as from a source of new reform, a new position, a new movement, a new revolution to repel the darkness, to stop tyranny, and to pulverize evil. (in Norton 1987, 40)

Only by adapting his message to the larger developments in Lebanon (Abisaab 2015, 142) and the extant anti-establishment sentiment among large segments of Shia Lebanese did Sadr succeeded in mobilizing not just the "slum dwellers of Beirut" but the "peasants of the South and

the clansmen of the Biqa',” despite their “sometimes palpable sociological differences” (Norton 1987, 40).[31] Increasingly, this entailed giving up his control of the *mahrumin* movement, turning away from practices like mass marches, hunger and general strikes and toward armed conflict (Abisaab 2015, 142). His exhortations to sacrifice to a revolution against tyranny took on a literal meaning as thousands of Shia men enlisted in *afwaj al-muqawama al-lubnaniyya*, the militia affiliated with the *mahurmin* movement (Ibid, 148). Literally “The Lebanese Resistance Battalions” its acronym, AMAL, means “hope” in Arabic. Not for nothing, it is clear that Sadr hoped it would not come to that.

Islamic AMAL

As part of the coalition of leftist and Arabist parties in the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), AMAL was trained by the PLO.[32] Managing only “a minor role in the fighting of 1975 and 1976,” Imam Sadr's influence waned decidedly from the outbreak of the Civil War until his disappearance in 1978 (Nortion 1987, 48).[33] Having “never heard a shot fired in anger before he arrived in Lebanon,” Sadr and his initiatives were “eclipsed by the violence that engulfed” the nation (Ibid, 49). The next “turning point” in the “radicalization of the Lebanese Shi'ite political movement” came with the invasion of Israel in 1982 (Siklawi 2012, 13). With Operation Peace for the Galilee, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) intended on “destroying…the PLO” whose

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[31] Concurrently, prominent Najaf cleric Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah (discussed in greater length in Chapter 3) proclaimed his program of *'harakiyyat al-waqi'* or “a perceptual transformation of relation through jihad against an unjust power, including obvious overtures to Marx's discussion of the 'radical negation of social reality' affected by the proletariat” (Abisaab and Abisaab 2014 xix, xvii).
[32] The Civil War was initially fought between two coalitions, the leftist Lebanese National Movement consisting of the PLO, the Progressive Socialist Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party and other pan-Arabist militias and the rightist Lebanese Front consisting of the Phalange, the National Liberal party and other Maronite-dominated militias including large sections of the military.
[33] Imam Sadr disappeared on 31 August 1978, while on a state visit to Libya. While no one knows for sure, it is believed that Col. Ghaddafi had a hand in Sadr's disappearance, potentially following some dispute over an arms deal.

secular nationalism and "persistent call for a peaceful diplomatic settlement" had become a real thorn in the side of "the US-Israeli strategy of gradual integration of the occupied territories" (Chomsky 1999, 19). By then AMAL had split into two factions. The first belonged to political upstart Nabih Berri[34] (1938-) who, because he coveted their territory in west Beirut and the Southern Province, agreed in principle with the main objective of Peace for Galilee, the departure of the PLO combatants from Lebanon (Avon et al. 2012, 24). The second faction led by Berri's former deputy Abbas al-Musawi (1952-1992) and influential clerics including Subhi al-Tufayli (1948-) and Na'im Qasim (1953-) pledged itself to the Palestinian cause and resisting the Israeli advance (Ibid). As the IDF marched toward Beirut, Musawi "accused [Berri of] blatant collaboration with the invading Israelis and, apparently with Iranian support, attempted to reorient the movement" (Norton 1987, 88).

Musawi situated his Islamic AMAL "within the dual Khomeinist perspective of revolutionary struggle and the fight against Israel" (Avon et al. 2012, 26). As a matter of principle, Islamic AMAL rejected outright the possibility of negotiations or compromise with Israel. Indeed, alongside the PLO, Musawi's combatants gave the IDF their first experience of serious ground opposition in the advance on Beirut (Fisk 2001, 227). Robert Fisk (Ibid), a BBC correspondent who lived in Lebanon for the duration of the conflict, explains

> At the time we attributed this to chance…a remarkable phenomenon had [actually] taken shape. The Shia militiamen were running on foot into the Israeli gunfire to launch grenades at the Israeli armour, actually moving to within 20 feet of the tanks to open fire at them. Some of the Shia fighters had torn off pieces of their shirts and wrapped them around their heads as bands of martyrdom as the Iranian revolutionary guards had…When they set fire to one Israeli armoured vehicle, the gunmen were emboldened to advance further…The Lebanese Shia were learning the principles of martyrdom and putting them into practice. Never before had we seen these men wear headbands like this;

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[34] Berri, born in Sierra Leone and educated at the Parisian *Faculté de Droit*, was the son of one of those monied Shia sought out by Sadr (Fisk 2001, 605). The up-start politician became the only member of Lebanon's *zuoma'* who does not hail from one of its traditional families.

> we thought it was another militia affectation but it was not. It was the beginning of a legend which also contained a strong element of truth. The Shia were now the Lebanese resistance. (Ibid)

Just south of Dahieh near the airport runway, the nascent Islamic AMAL—the individual men who gave themselves to the beach that night—breathed fresh life into the Karbala paradigm. Though the Israelis eventually did succeed in flushing the PLO leadership out of west Beirut, Islamic AMAL continued to attack IDF military targets throughout its five-week long siege, thereby establishing itself as the "leader of the resistance to foreign military occupation" (Addis and Blanchard 2011, 7). I do not agree "that the acts that fall under the rubric of 'Shia terrorism,' such as the taking of the Western hostages or the hijacking of the TWA airliner in June 1985, are justified" (Halawi 1992, 3). Nor do I take "the position that there is no such thing as Shia terrorism as such" (Ibid). Along with Halawi (Ibid), I am merely asserting that "when complex realities such as the strategic use of [violence] are simplistically interpreted as fanaticism and religious hatred, it not only displays historical ignorance, but blocks access to rebuilding grounds for understanding." For our purposes, all that is required is an appreciation for how convincingly Islamic AMAL's leadership must have argued that the United States' complicity "in Israel's violations of international law…[proves] that there is no relief through diplomacy or negotiation. [That] *jihad*[35] and sacrifice alone would lead to liberation" (Ibid).[36]

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[35] The term *jihad*, literally struggle or striving, appears over forty times in the Quran in reference to divinely sanctioned warfare as well as spiritual exercise leading to redemption (Cook 2007). Contemporary usage varies widely.

[36] The conspicuous evacuation of American forces from Beirut just prior to the September 1982 massacre of unarmed Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatila camps, facilitated by the IDF and carried out by its proxy militias, is but one instance informing this argument (Fisk 2001, 360). For the most detailed and indeed heartrending accounts of this blackest episode of an exceptionally inhumane war see Al-Hout (2004).

In the Southern Province the Israelis remained for seventeen years, maintaining a so-called "security belt" (Fisk 2001, 136).[37] Continuing its *jihad*, Islamic AMAL soon caught the attention of the Islamic Republic of Iran. With the subsequent support of the Revolutionary Guard Islamic AMAL was propelled into "the vanguard of the…groups that would later emerge under the rubric of Hizballah" in 1985 (Addis and Blanchard 2011, 7).[38] For better or for worse, Hizballah, literally "Party of God," remain to this day the stewards of Lebanon's Shia.

Hizballah

Following the disappearance of Sadr in 1978, segments of AMAL located in the Southern Province began "engag[ing] in concerted opposition to the armed Palestinian presence" (Norton 1987, 59).[39] Ravished by Israeli reprisals (night raids in particular), villagers had rallied around a resurgent, secular version of the party promising to reign in the PLO. Nabih Berri, having previously striven to maintain at least a semblance of support for the Palestinian cause, called "without equivocation" for the "re-establishment of the legitimate government and its institutions (and especially the army), for the support of the Palestinian struggle *in* Palestine *not* Lebanon, and for the disarming of militias, thugs, and marauders …" (Ibid, 61). With the withdrawal of the

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[37] The Israeli security belt was maintained in part by the South Lebanon Army (SLA), the most infamous of Israeli's proxy militias, "uniformed, trained, paid, armed and commanded by [the IDF]" (Fisk 2001, 106). Shia from the Southern Province accounted for roughly half of the SLA. The "relatively high salaries that Israel paid…created a powerful economic incentive [for them]…Living [as they were] in the midst of an area economically devastated…the SLA was oftentimes the only potential source of steady employment for many [of its] residents" (Ruebner 2000, 2). After the war many of the SLA collaborators were re-settled in northern Israel.

[38] In their 1985 manifesto titled "An open letter to the downtrodden in Lebanon and in the world," Hizballah "openly and loudly" declared itself "an *umma* which fears God only and is by no means ready to tolerate injustice, aggression and humiliation. America, its Atlantic Pact allies, and the Zionist entity in the holy land of Palestine, attacked us and continue to do so without respite. Their aim is to make us eat dust continually. This is why we are, more and more, in a state of permanent alert in order to repel aggression and defend our religion, our existence, our dignity. They invaded our country, destroyed our villages, slit the throats of our children, violated our sanctuaries and appointed masters over our people who committed the worst massacres against our *umma*. They do not cease to give support to these allies of Israel, and do not enable us to decide our future according to our own wishes."

[39] Indeed prior to the Israeli invasion in 1982 "widespread skirmishes [between Berri's AMAL and Palestinian guerillas] broke out in a number of southern villages. Fighting erupted [again] in Beirut and in sixteen villages…in April" (Norton 1987, 68).

PLO from Lebanon in 1982 and subsequently that of the Israelis from the Nabatiyeh and Tyre districts to the 20-mile security zone in 1985, AMAL seized control over the liberated areas and placed gunmen at checkpoints outside of the Palestinian camps (Siklawi 2012, 16). Determined to prevent any further provocation of the Israelis, AMAL "regulated traffic in and out of the camps…disarm[ed] the radicals and interdict[ed] arms shipments intended for the south" (Norton 1987, 121-2).

In the Dahieh and Biqa', where people were not constantly exposed to deadly reprisals, the "mood in the south was not neatly replicated" (Norton 1987, 86). The treatment of Palestinians by Berri thus pushed Shia in these other areas closer to Hizballah (Ibid, 86). Others still were driven there by Berri's acceptance of a ministerial role in Rashid Karami's 1984 government (Ibid, 122). In Beirut in particular, a cold turf war ensued between Hizballah and AMAL, cold at least until 20 May 1985, when AMAL "attacked [the] PLO militias [that had re-spawned] in the Sabra, Shatila and Bourj al-Barajneh camps with the declared intention of eliminating their presence from Lebanon" (O'Ballance 1998, 158). Berri bombarded the camps periodically for two years and sieged them on three separate occasions, the first lasting several weeks, the second a month and the third for six (Latif 2008).[40] Hizballah publicly opposed AMAL's war on the camps, on occasion even intervening militarily on behalf of the Palestinians. Soon the "camp wars became, among other things, a competition for the political heart of the Shi'I community" (Norton 1987, 123). A full-blown confrontation between the two groups erupted in February 1988, lasted two years and took the lives of more people than in any other episode of inter-sect fighting during the Civil War (Fuller and Francke 1999, 217). What's more,

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[40] By February 1987 an AMAL-enforced blockade led "a delegation of Burj al-Barajneh residents [to] approach their religious leaders [and] ask whether they could eat the flesh of human corpses as the supply of dogs, cats and mules was exhausted" (O'Ballance 1998, 172).

the war of the camps between AMAL and Hizballah displaced between 32,000 and 144,000 Palestinian refugees.

In the end Hizballah evicted AMAL from the Dahieh and "consolidated its strategic position at the southern gates of Beirut" (Harb 2007, 15). In the eyes of many Shia, AMAL and Berri had been reduced to a "symbol of corruption," an attribution neither have been able to since shake (Siklawi 2012, 21). This political victory of Hizballah over AMAL is recorded in the 1990 Taif Agreement, the accords signed in Saudi Arabia that brought an end to the war. Though it was rejected by Hizballah

> as a repetition of the 1943 National Pact, in so far as the Agreement did not abolish political sectarianism…the group accepted the security aspects of the Agreement because it allowed the resistance to remain armed while other Lebanese militias were forced to disarm. Therefore, the Agreement served as an implicit recognition of Hizbullah's right of resistance and of its monopoly on non-state violence within Lebanon. Thus, the Lebanese state, and the various sectarian groups, effectively sanctioned Hizballah's resistance against Israeli occupation and its right to continue amassing arms, while other groups were forced to disarm. (Abboud and Muller 2016, 62)

Since its inception Hizballah has maintained that "the power of resistance is that it is a righteous combat, supported by God, which inevitably leads to victory" (Harb and Leenders 2005, 189). "The greatest evidence," accordingly, "is the liberation of the south of Lebanon in May 2000 and the defeat of the Israeli army by the resistance" (Ibid). I was ten at the time and remember my parents receiving in the mail a video series produced by al-Manar, a Hizballah-run television station which shortly afterward became available via satellite, that depicted the celebration of independence in the Southern Province (Ibid, 188). All their friends came over to watch it, my mother serving Turkish coffee and lazy cake, a Lebanese chocolate non-bake biscuit-based desert, each time. It was on one such occasion that I first heard the world *hala.* Without yet fully comprehending it, I knew that it had something to do with Hizballah. The period after their liberation of the Southern Province marks the peak of the Party's popularity among non-Shia

groups in Lebanon. The special clause in the Taif appeared to have been vindicated and Hizballah's representation in both the Lebanese Parliament and Cabinet boomed (Harb and Deeb 2011, 12).[41] As Ghassan Hage (2009, 73) has explained, "[w]hile part of the success of the PLO among Arabs came from its capacity to generate a certain sense of pride in the ability of Arabs to be active rather than passive [in the face of Israel], it was really Hizballah that made the first ever claim of an active resistance that had produced actual results." Anyone who wanted to join in on this "psychological gain" could, and indeed there is "plenty of evidence in official and non-official discourse to prove that" the liberation of the Southern Province was experienced as such "both by the Arabs who celebrated it and the Israelis who deplored it" (Ibid).

Since their historic victory, the "debate over Hizballah's weapons…has emerged as the pole around which Lebanese politics...revolves" (Abboud and Muller 2016, 61; see also al-Dakhil 2010). Calls for their disarmament began as early as 2004, when a Sunni-Maronite-Druze alliance unfolded "to counterbalance a perceived growing political and demographic weight in the Shia community" (Ibid, 77). This alliance was, in turn, emboldened by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 (UNSCR 1559), co-sponsored by the US and France. The

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[41] As explained by Harb and Leenders (2005, 185), Hizballah's "participation in the Lebanese political system was indeed the outcome of fierce internal debates in the party. In 1992, before the first Lebanese parliamentary elections after the end of the war and the signing of the Taif Agreement, Hizballah's Shura council was divided into two camps. The first argued against political participation, which was seen as an inevitable compromise with Hizballah's revolutionary ideals. The second justified this participation by a re-interpretation of the 1989 Taif Agreement (which forms the Lebanese post-war constitution); it was argued that participation in the political system would allow the party to change it from within. Eventually, the latter view prevailed, resulting in Hizballah's participation in the parliamentary elections of 1992, in which it won eight seats (out of 128). Ever since, Hizballah has participated in both parliamentary and municipal elections, gaining considerable numbers of votes. However, Hizballah has insisted on qualifying its participation in Lebanon's political institutions while it maintained a certain distance from Lebanese politics in general— thereby allowing its denunciation of the government's practices while ensuring its role as an opposition party. As one of Hizballah's leaders put it succinctly: 'We distinguish between participation [in the legislative elections of 1992] and our vision of the actual political system that we consider to be the basis of confessional, economic, administrative, and political problems because it is built on a confessional basis and the basis of *muhassasa* [allotment] that hinders development and impedes people's rights.'" The debate regarding Hizballah's participation in the Lebanese government has once again become a heated one in light of the October 2019 uprising (see below).

former, worried that Damascus was instigating and supporting the resistance against them in Iraq, were looking to reign in new Syrian President Bashar al-Assad with UNSCR 1559, calling as it did "for Lebanon to be free of all 'foreign' forces (read: Syrian) and for the disbanding of all militias, a clear reference to [Syrian allies] Hizballah" (Ibid, 72).[42] After the assassination on February 14, 2005 of recently resigned Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri (1944-2005), Hizballah's domestic rivals—including Walid Jumblat (1949-), Sa'ad al-Hariri (1970-) (heir of the assassinated Prime Minister) and former president Amin Gemayel (1942-)—accused Syrian intelligence of having planted the car bomb which detonated outside the St George's Hotel and demanded the implementation of UNSCR 1559 (Ibid, 74).

Hizballah and its supporters responded by organizing a rally in downtown Beirut on March 8th to thank Syria for its "role in supporting the resistance and protecting the country against Israeli aggression" (Ibid). In a speech, Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah[43] (1960-) "pledged Lebanon's commitment to the 'special' relationship with Syria" (Abboud and Muller 2016, 75). On March 14th the opposing camp held a counter protest that "similarly attracted hundreds of thousands of people to Beirut in a show of support for Syrian withdrawal" (Ibid). Syria would withdraw its presence by the end of April but Hizballah has continued to show deft skill in defusing calls for its disarmament, largely because "the massive, organized exercise of violence required to live up to the Weberian maxim[44] is something the Lebanese state is simply

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[42] Syria had maintained a presence in Lebanon since 1976, having initially invaded on behalf of the Maronite establishment with the stated aim of curbing the PLO's operations (Fisk 2001, 81). By 1978 Syria had reversed its position and begun openly allying itself with the PLO and AMAL (Ibid, 139). Today the Syria regime is allied with Iran and Hizballah.

[43] The current Secretary General of Hizballah was born on 31 August 1960 in the Hazmieh neighbourhood of East Beirut (Matar 2015, 434). His father, Abdelkarim Nasrallah, was a vegetable and fruit salesman originally from the Southern Province (Ibid, 435). He relocated his young family there at the beginning of the Civil War. There, the young Nasrallah was attracted to Sadr's *mahrumin* movement, later joining AMAL (Ibid).

[44] By which I mean the oft-repeated monopoly of legitimate means of violence (see, for example, Anter 2020).

incapable of" (Ibid, 64). Indeed, it appears that the Lebanese state is capable of producing little more than presidential, economic and garbage crises (see Geha 2019). Whether this is by design or due to the political deadlock, of which the March 8th and 14th coalitions are an expression, is unclear. While Hizballah's own networks have been relatively successful in providing its own constituency with many services and opportunities (more on these below) the central government cannot, the country's overall condition has rapidly deteriorated over the last fifteen years. *fasad* (corruption) and *muhasasa* (clientelism) are tools of the trade for Lebanese politicians. That Nabih Berri and Sa'ad Hariri are corrupt is but an open secret (see Leenders 2012): constantly alluded to and spoken of in private but never publicly stated. At least not until 17 October 2019, when a popular protest over a proposed tax on the popular WhatsApp messaging service escalated to an uprising against the political class, its contribution to the untenable state of inflation, a 46% unemployment rate and the crumbling of water and electricity services ("Protests erupt in Lebanon over plans to impose new taxes." *AlJazeera*, 17 October 2019).

Cutting across classes, confessions and geography, the uprising took as its slogan "All of Them Means All of Them" (Traboulsi, Karim. "Lebanon protesters declare 'week of anger' amid ruling-class indifference." *The New Arab,* 14 January 2020). Lebanese-Shia, among whom there are many ardent supporters of the uprising, have shown to be reluctant to include Hassan Nasrallah and Hizballah with the "All" in this instance. Consequently, a section of activists has accused these supporters of being reactionaries, perhaps unconsciously rebounding into the old struggle "between 'us' and 'them,' 'we' being liberals and democrats who 'love life', and 'they' being Islamists…indoctrinated into a 'culture of death.' We are backed by the United States and France, while they are instruments of Iran and Syria" (Harb 2007, 17). More than anything else

though, I feel that this disconnect is a product of a miscomprehension of the *hala* and its importance to pious Shia.

hala al-islamiyya

Supporters of Hizballah are neither resource-dependent nor brainwashed. A majority of Lebanon's Shia have been and remain successfully mobilized by the Party of God through policy networks in the Dahieh, Biqa' and Southern Province that "not only provide material resources to their beneficiaries [but] also… recognition and belonging to a world of meanings" (Harb and Leenders 2005, 191). That meaningful horizon, technically speaking, is the *hala*, a system of organized parts composed, in turn, of beliefs and practices that serve the same purpose as the system as a whole: "they both make sense of life and convey the sense made" (Segal 2012, 512). Its parts have been identified as a "resistance society" (Harb 2007), an "Islamic sphere" (Harb and Leenders 2005) and "milieu" (Harb and Deeb 2011). Before delving into them, some comment on the vast network of institutions through which they are disseminated is necessary. Things have certainly come a long way for Lebanon's Shia since Sadr opened his Council in 1969. Hizballah oversees a dozen institutions which provide services related to the armed resistance as well as social, economic and urban needs.

> Of the first category of institutions, the associations of the Martyr (al-Shahid, founded in 1982) and of the Wounded (al-Juraha, established in 1990) are two NGOs that depend administratively on Hizballah. Al-Shahid looks after 2500 relatives of martyrs, prisoners and missing individuals. The association manages schools, a hospital, a dispensary and ensures access to a variety of resources through a network of relationships for 'stabilizing the family in its environment'. Al-Juraha takes care of more than 3000 wounded along the same lines. Of the second category, two Hizballah NGOs propose educational and micro-credit services. The Educational Institute (al-Mu'assasa al-Tarbawiyya, founded in 1991) supervises the education sector and aims at 'redefining the structure of society' through Islamic learning. It manages nine schools in Lebanon, grouping around 5300 students. The Good Loan (al-Qard al-Hassan, opened in 1984) specialises in providing micro-credit and administers an average of 750 loans per month, at sharply discounted interest rates. (Harb and Leender 2005, 187)

In addition, three Iranian-based charities providing support to the poor, sick and housing-insecure are directed by Party members (Ibid). All this to say that, yes, Hizballah's network of institutions does make an attractive alternative to unreliable public and expensive private options (Ibid, 188). But what really makes them stand out is their "holistic approach," how they communicate codes, norms and values that Hizballah deems conducive to the production of a resistance society, Islamic sphere and milieu (Ibid). The associations of the Martyr and Wounded, for example, institutionalize a commitment to resistance. They service combatants and their families as well as provide Nasrallah with a platform to remind his wider base that "combat is a small *jihad*, the biggest *jihad* is the spiritual *jihad*" (Ibid, 189). Resistance, Nasrallah holds, becomes an organizing principle of society when commitment to its mission is observed "as much through collective public practices such as *'ashura* as through everyday individual practices" (Harb 2007, 17). "Thus," Mona Harb explains (Ibid), "a pious Shi'i will claim her belonging to the 'resistance society' by greeting others, dressing, eating, studying, going to the gym, marrying, raising children, socializing, volunteering [etc.] in ways that obey faith codes broadly defined by clerics and peculiarly redefined by shared personal experiences" (Ibid). As such, the meaning of her resistance can be said to be embedded in "an interrelated religious and political framework" (Harb and Leenders 2005, 174). Schools directed by the Education Institute, in turn, produce both Islamic sphere and milieu, physical "spaces where certain ideas, norms, and ways of life are inscribed, facilitated, and negotiated, and the social environment constructed through [them]" (Harb and Deeb 2011, 11).[45] Put otherwise, the schools contribute both to the *hala*'s landscape as well as a corresponding "state of being" or interiority (Ibid).

[45] For an embedded and fascinating look at the "resistance and anti-oppression pedagogy" deployed in Hizballah administered schools, see Zakharia (2017).

Systems like it, worlds of meaning composed of smaller systems serving the same function, are more commonly referred to as "cultures."[46] At least by those who ascribe to Clifford Geertz' (1973) definition, which I find particularly convincing. Accordingly, the *hala* means what it does to so many Shia Lebanese because it gives them meaning back; they give it meaningfulness and it gives their lives meaningfulness in return (Hage 2009, 68).[47] Because in places "characterized by a deep inequality in the distribution of meaning" (2003, 78), culture becomes sacrosanct. More skin than sweater, especially for those who came of age during the Civil War, people born in the 1960s and 70s. This was the case with my parents who, after living in Canada for over 25 years,[48] remain as attached as ever to the *hala*.[49] For a long time I thought as little of this attachment as a certain cohort of the uprising does now. I considered it a manipulation, a heteronomy. It stood in stark contrast to my image of freedom in the West, a place which, for me, was just on the other side of the door. In the next chapter, I chart the development in my understanding of the problem posed to me by assimilation. In so doing, I underscore the foolhardiness of a position that associates heteronomy with the sphere of home/family and freedom with the sphere of school/society.

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[46] Hizballah themselves refer to the *hala* as a culture: "We insist on culture, because this is what makes identity. Resistance is not an aim, it is the result of culture" (party official in Harb and Leenders 2005, 190).

[47] Hage (2009, 68), like Harb and Leenders (2005, 192), alludes to Bourdieu's concept of "illusio" in order to explain the dialectical way in which the *hala* has become so meaningful to Shia Lebanese.

[48] In 1967 the Canadian Immigration Act was amended to abolish discrimination on the basis of national origin (Hayani 1999, 285). This led in the following decades to record numbers of Arab immigration to Canada: 64,147 between 1970-1979; 75,899 between 1980-1989; and over 133,000 between 1990-1997 (Ibid, 286). From 1970-1991 Lebanese accounted for 44% of these figures and then 12.7% between 1992-1997 (Ibid, 288). Due to limitations of the Canadian census (see below), it is not possible to distinguish between Christian and Muslim immigrants from Lebanon. However, we know that during the first seven years of the war the majority of emigrants in general from Lebanon were Christian (Abdelhady 2011, 6). This trend reversed following the Israeli invasion, toward a majority of Muslim and Druze migrants (Ibid; see also Helou 1995).

[49] This is not to say that my parents are completely unattached to Canada. Like the Lebanese Canadians interviewed by Stasiulis and Amery (2010, 87-8), the nature of my parents' attachment to Canada is best characterized as "instrumental and highly focused on formal membership in the state…the value and ease of travel afforded by a highly respected passport and the 'insurance policy' that such a passport provide[s] in terms of safe passage from violence and unbearable risks of living in a politically unstable country."

Conclusion

In this chapter I laid down the groundwork for the ongoing qualification of my experience as a "Lebanese-origin youth" by situating it specifically within the context of the *hala*, an experience or horizon of meaning shared by pious Shia. In carrying out this qualification my aim is twofold. First, to avoid subsuming different or divergent experiences in my narrative of assimilation and second, to account for the urgency of my acculturative stress. The problem of assimilation, the antagonism between the sphere of home/family and the sphere of school/society, was perhaps more pronounced for me than for a Lebanese-origin youth from a different confession because inherent to the *hala* is "a strong rejection of Western culture and its impact on Arab and Muslim society" (Harb and Leenders 2005, 181). This rejection is so pronounced, it continues to impact me well into adulthood. In the following chapter, I offer an account of how I first became aware of this antagonism, the development in my understanding of it over time, and the lessons learned.

Chapter 3: The Problem of Assimilation

Assimilation poses a great many problems that escape both the narrow scope of this project and my talent for expression. Pangs of guilt and isolation I would only profane. What I intend by “the Problem of Assimilation,” then, is the competition that ensued over my allegiance and sense of identity between the *hala* and majoritarian Canada, between the culture I was exposed to at home and the culture I first encountered at school. With this contribution to the existing literature, I look to provide a counterargument to the common idea that says the choice between a Lebanese identity and a Canadian one need not be zero-sum, that if not outright assimilation then at least some level of integration is desirable. My parents, I maintain, were right to try and prevent me from adopting majoritarian Canadian attitudes and values. Ultimately, at stake was the preponderance for me of an ideology claiming transparency of representation and immediacy of experience. A certain self-stultifying impulsiveness. It should go without saying though that I did not always feel this way. For a long time, I resented what I experienced as the heteronomy of the *hala* and instead chased secular standards of individualism and authenticity.

In this chapter I will chart the development in my understanding of the problem of assimilation across four “inscapes,” eras of interiority that are “as much psychological conditions as material arrangements” (Tuan 2009, 10).[50] The data presented therein are reminisces of the refrains and experiences, related to either the sphere of home/family or school/society, that

[50] In my estimation, Yi-Fu Tuan is the single greatest human geographer. Not a one has had the courage to take the discipline in the directions he has, let alone with the style and efficacy that is characteristic of his work. To redefine the potential of geography, to push its boundaries to their absolute limit while maintaining a sense of disciplinarity, really to dance in chains, is the luminous legacy of this most modest visionary. I borrow the idea of inscapes from his autobiography: *Who Am I?* (2009).

defined each inscape. It is necessary to convey my understanding in stages because the significance of the realization it ultimately led me to—Objective Irony—can be grasped only in light of the road I took. But first, information on my specific slice of majoritarian Canada.

White Oaks

I arrived in Canada with my mother in the winter of 1995, aged five. Having been there already for two years, my father picked us up from Pearson International Airport in Toronto and drove us to our new home in the suburbs of London, Ontario. With a population of 383,822, the "Forest City" is Canada's fifteenth most populous (Census Profile 2016). At 13,740, London's largest visible minority group is Arab with Lebanese, the largest single contingent, accounting for 4,715 of its members (Ibid).[51] The religious affiliations of London's Lebanese are difficult to ascertain as the Canadian census does not collect any information on the matter (it is slated to begin doing so in 2021). According to the relevant excerpt from Statistic Canada's (2001) Profiles of Ethnic Communities in Canada, 42% of Lebanese-origin Canadians are Catholic (Maronite), 10% Christian (Greek) Orthodox and 30% Muslim. The national sample is unlikely to be representative of London's population, though, as it is skewed by the substantial Maronite community in Montreal (Abdelhady 2011, 8). In addition to the lack of information from the census and other such surveys, the difficulty in fixing the number of Shia among London's Muslim Lebanese is compounded by the ignorance of North American demographers regarding the second largest branch of Islam, particularly prior to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq (see for

[51] Statistics Canada defines non-European and non-Indigenous Canadians as "visible minorities." All Arabic speaking persons are in turn considered "Arab." In order to get a clearer picture of the variegated peoples subsumed under that category one must turn to data collected on "ethnic origins" where, since 1976, census respondents have been able to identify as "Lebanese" (Tastsoglou and Petrinioti 2011, 176).

example Taras 2006 and Jacoby and Neggaz 2018). Speaking to organizers of the *hussainiyah*,[52] I was able to acquire a rough estimate of 200, most of whom reside in White Oaks.

Developed in the 1970s, the south end neighbourhood was named after the featured family in Canadian author Mazo de la Roche's sixteen novel series *Jalna* (1944). The title of the series, in turn, is a reference to the manor home in which the Whiteoaks' family story unfolds. Accordingly, this manor was built in the 1850s by the family patriarch upon his arrival to Canada from India, where, in the city of Jalna, he had served as an officer of the Raj (Ibid). In a curious symmetry, the neighbourhood bearing the name of the nostalgic British colonial officer from de la Roche's novels would in 1991 be designated by the City of London as a settlement area for newcomers (South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre 2020), many of whom would likewise arrive to Canada burdened by their nostalgia for former British colonies. In addition to Shia Lebanese, then, the drab high-rise apartments and townhouse complexes of White Oaks are home to several other immigrant and visible minority groups, including other Lebanese and Arabs, South Asians, West Asians, Southeast Asians and Latin Americans (Census Profile 2016). There are, as a percentage of the population, far more immigrants (35%) and visible minorities (37%) in White Oaks than the rest of London (19.5% and 16.1% respectively) and Ontario (29.1% and 29.3% respectively) (Census Program Data Viewer, 2016 Census). The median total income of households in White Oaks ($56,102) is significantly lower than it is for households in the rest of London ($70,556) and Ontario ($73,700) (Ibid).

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[52] Strictly speaking, a *hussainiyah* is a venue for Moharram ceremonies commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hosayn (627-670) (Calmard 2004). In White Oaks the *hussainiyah* is a venue for much else besides, including religious and language instruction, the delivery of sermons by visiting Sheikhs and funerals. London has Mosques as well, but these are not typically visited by the Lebanese-Shia. There are no religious edicts which prevent Sunni and Shia from sharing places of worship, nothing except social mores and anxiety.

With these figures, I aim to begin drawing the reader's attention to the fact that London is an unintegrated city, with the majority of its immigrants and visible minorities funneled into a single neighbourhood, poorly serviced by public transit, at the edge of town. This is worth keeping in mind as I analyze the problem posed to me by assimilation: the antagonism between the sphere of my Shia Lebanese home/family and the sphere of my Canadian school/society. Prior to delving deeper into this antagonism, though, I must first clarify, in the broadest terms, how Shia Lebanese compare with and relate to London's other Arab and Muslim groups.

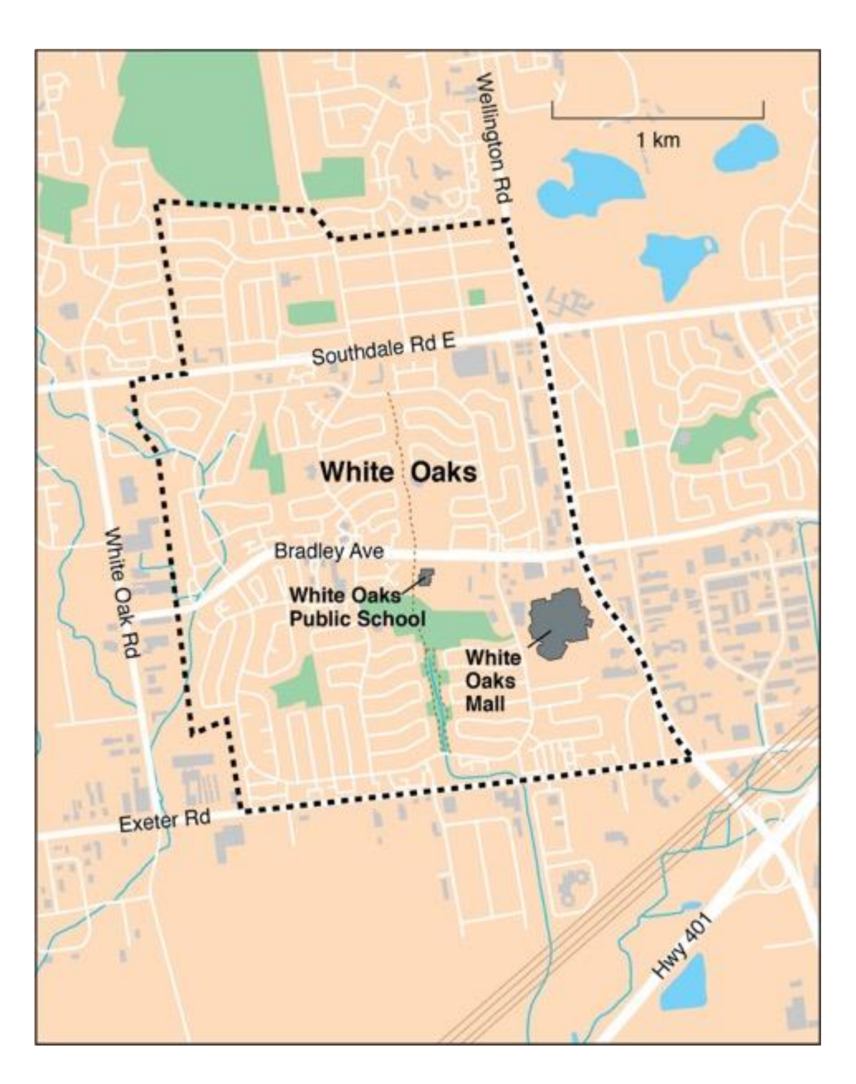


Figure 6: Map of White Oaks
(Source: Eric Leinberger, UBC Geography Dpt. Cartographer)

Generally speaking, Arabs suffer the highest rate of low-income earning (51.2%) among London's immigrant groups, nearly five times the city average (11.6%) (Visible Minority Low-income Status Table, 2016 Census). While the census does not provide a group-by-group breakdown of this figure, it does show that the rate falls considerably from the first (56.9%) to the second generation (38.3%) and again from the second to the third (8.1%) (Ibid). This confirms the fairly intuitive notion that the groups which arrived most recently are the most economically vulnerable. The Iraqis who arrived in the wake of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), for example, are far less likely to be employed in well-paying management positions, scientific and technical occupations or sales than are the children of those mostly Coptic and middle-class Muslim Egyptians who fled the socialist regime of Gamal Abdel-Nasser in the 1950s and 60s (Hayani 1999, 286). Moreover, given the existence of an extensive Egyptian patronage network, it is possible that a family that has only recently arrived from Cairo may immediately experience more economic success than a Baghdadi family that has been in London for five or even ten years. In the same way, Maronites who emigrated from Lebanon during the Civil War were at an advantage to their Muslim counterparts by virtue of the Maronite presence in Canada dating back to 1882 (Ibid, 284).[53] Maronites and Egyptians, well into their second or, as in the case of the former, third and fourth generations, consequently work and reside in neighbourhoods that are wealthier than White Oaks, like Byron in the west end or Masonville in the north. Sharing White

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[53] This is not to imply that families such as mine were left entirely to their own devices. East of the intersection at White Oak Rd. and Southdale Rd. East there used to be a Lebanese bakery called Goody's. It was owned by a man named Hussein, originally from the Dahieh, who had evidently been in London for a long time. Goody's was a hub for newcomers, Shia and Sunni alike, a place to network with other Lebanese immigrants and problem shoot. Hussein went out of his way to help newcomers settle, whether by helping them with their search for housing, employment or even spouses. Both of my parents were employed by him at various points in their careers. As I got older and stopped visiting them at work he would complain and ask that they bring me around. Hussein was the closest thing to family that we had. I know that many others felt the same. About ten years ago he was diagnosed with liver cancer, fell into a coma and passed away, all within a six-week span. With Hussein gone, White Oaks lost an institution, an important piece of the social fabric. This footnote is a humble tribute to him.

Oaks with the Shia Lebanese are other first-generation Arab Muslim groups: Sunni-Lebanese (almost exclusively from the Biqa'i village of Mdouhka),[54] Iraqis, Palestinians and Syrians. In addition, they share the neighbourhood, and thus come into the most frequent contact with, a number of non-Arab Muslim groups, with Pakistanis, Kurds, Kosovans, Serbs and Albanians. If one can then speak of a Muslim community in London, the Shia Lebanese are a minority within it.

In his history of Muslim identity politics in the U.S., Mohommed Muqtedar Khan (2000, 94) found that "Islamic identity is more important than Muslim diversity when Muslims interact with non-Muslims." In foreign, non-Muslim settings, interactions between Muslims are constrained by differences based on national origins, ethnicity, geo-politics (Saudi versus Iranian aligned) and interpretations of Islamic law and history. Verily, the Muslims of White Oaks engage in remarkably nuanced processes of "internal othering" (Ibid, 90). For example, while my parents have a stable and tight-knit circle of Shia Lebanese friends, the circle can on occasion, depending on political developments back in Lebanon, expand to include Sunni Lebanese. And although they share a *hussainiyah* with Iraqis and Pakistanis, they are far more inclined to be patrons of Palestinian businesses, presumably out of a sense of Levantine kinship. While that sense of kinship certainly extends to Syrians as well, following the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War (2011-), they retained relations only with those Damascenes who confirmed their loyalty to President Bashar al Assad, a critical ally of Hizballah. Finally, interactions with non-Arab and non-Shia Muslim groups are rigid and formal. When my mother passes by another *hijab* wearing

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[54] Of the 4715 Lebanese Londoners, some 4000 are from a single village, Mdoukha, seventy kms east of Beirut (Beiman, Jennifer. "Spotlighting our Lebanon connection." London Free Press. October 29, 2017). To recognize this connection, the City unveiled a "Mdoukha Avenue" road sign in 2017 at the intersection of Bradley and Ernest Avenues in White Oaks.

woman in the supermarket, for instance, she nods and offers an "*as-salmu alaykum*." As a child I had a vague sense of these divisions and would inquire after them. Whenever I did so my parents would reprimand me and explain that to speak of these matters was *ayb* (shameful/dishonourable). Only by carefully observing their reactions to Arabic language news media did I gain a more forthright appraisal of the issues they had with other Muslim groups. As when my father, out of frustration, might say something like "the [Lebanese] Sunni think only with their stomachs," implying that they lacked the fortitude to make the types of sacrifices required of them by the *muqawama* (resistance).

As Khan (Ibid, 94) hints, what the Muslims of White Oaks most share in common is a compromised identity vis-à-vis London's majoritarian Canadian groups. In the early twentieth century, migration from Muslim majority countries became noticeable enough to fall under public scrutiny (from 2000 between 1882-1889 to 5,600 between 1900-1909). Influential voices belonging to the likes of the Reverend and Member of Parliament James S. Woodsworth decried the "Levantine race" as among the least desirable additions to Canada (Hayani 1999, 285). This sentiment continues "to fester, awaiting an opportunity to erupt" (S. Abu-Laban and B. Abu-Laban 1999, 115). Regrettably, opportunities for it to erupt have been increasing in frequency since the early 1990s, when the majority of White Oaks' Muslim residents began arriving. Events such as the Gulf War (1990-1) and the attacks of 11 September 2001 (9/11) have constituted critical moments in their relationship with London's majoritarian groups. A sort of routine has emerged whereby, periodically, Muslims (and those presumed to be) are put on the defensive and majoritarian Canadians adopt a "siege mentality," one of being overwhelmed by a flow of unwanted refugees and fifth column (Hage 2016, 38). In his book *The Gulf Within: Canadian Arabs, Racism and the Gulf War* (1991), journalist Zuhair Kashmeri explains how the

mainstream media's spectacle of "Operation Desert Storm" contributed to an atmosphere of hostility and paranoia, one in which a seven-year-old boy named Hussein was repeatedly beaten by his classmates at a public school in London (Ibid, 36). When parents of bullied children lobbied for sensitivity training for students and teachers, then Director of the London School Board, Jack Little, explained that it was "impossible to avoid" problems such as the one little Hussein faced, "because children simply repeated what they had heard in their surroundings at home" (Ibid, 34). What's more, rather than attempt to counteract that influence, Little's schools continued organizing war-related projects, like making yellow ribbons and writing letters of support for troops, thus further inciting racist attacks on Muslim and Arab students (Ibid, 37). Their effects lingered, but with the conclusion of the Gulf War strong expressions of hostility toward Muslims/Arabs rescinded to the margins, where they remained for a decade (see for example Kumar 2010).

I was eleven years old when American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the North and South towers of the World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan. For weeks afterwards another boy would follow me home from White Oaks P.S., shouting "Paki" and telling me to "go back where I came from," like a herald spreading the news that Londoners' ease with Muslims and Arabs was beginning to disappear again. While majoritarian Canadians had imagined themselves being "besieged by men in beards and women in veils" before, the response to 9/11 was distinctive as the government began taking their imaginaries seriously (Razack 2008, 178). Suddenly legal mechanisms contained in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* were being used to detain non-citizens without due process, not for committing any act of terrorism, but for being considered to have the potential to do so (Ibid, 4). The government even considered extending similar provisions in the *Anti-Terrorism Act*, provisions

applying to citizens (Ibid). Conversations between my parents and their friends were subsequently dominated by the possibility of being interned like the Japanese had been in the wake of Pearl Harbor, a widespread concern at the time which sensationalized media coverage did little to quell (Cainkar 2005). Neither did all the dissenting looks and comments from strangers at Springbank Park or White Oaks Mall. Moreover, unlike the eruption of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab sentiment during the Gulf War, the hostility and paranoia inspired by the events of 9/11 never quite faded into the background. For instance, it was certainly a factor in the "Canadians of convenience" debate which dominated headlines in the summer of 2006, when the government evacuated some 13,000 citizens from the ports of Beirut and Tyre following the outbreak of a war between Israel and Hizballah (Stasiulis and Amery 2010, 96). The talking heads of cable networks like CTV (Ibid) debated whether or not Canada ought to revisit its policy of permitting dual citizenship, the sub-text reading "should the government have spent all this money evacuating terrorist sympathizers?" There were many families from White Oaks in Lebanon that summer, mine included, who witnessed the IDF's indiscriminate shelling of civilian neighbourhoods in the Southern Province and Dahieh (Ibid, 80). They perceived Prime Minister Stephen Harper's unequivocal support of the Israeli strikes, even when they resulted in the deaths of eight members of a single Montreal family (Ibid, 85), "as an extension of anti-Muslim racism rather than a separate issue" (Hage 2009, 60).

The siege mentality that first formed among majoritarian Canadian groups during the Gulf War, and then was given political legitimacy by the actions of the government following 9/11, reached its zenith with the Syrian Civil War (2011-). Between the government's commitment to settle over 12,000 refugees in Ontario (Gajewski, Misha. "Where are Syrian refugees settling in Canada?" *CTVNews.ca*, October 12, 2016), including over 2,400 in London

(Bieman, Jennifer. "Region's Syrians—2,400 and counting—settling into new lives" *London Free Press*, March 19, 2018), and the media's obsessive and near pornographic depiction of the violence committed by ISIS (see Cottee 2019), it was only a matter of time before Islamophobia became an "epidemic" in the province (Keung, Nicholas. "Ontario Facing 'epidemic of Islamophobia' survey finds" *Toronto Star*, July 3, 2016). According to a study by the Noor Cultural Centre (2017, 7), commissioned by the House of Commons following the murder of six Muslim worshipers in the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec on 29 January 2017, the number of anti-Muslim hate crimes more than tripled between 2012 to 2015, despite the overall incidence of hate crimes declining over that period. A tally of reported hate-crimes kept by the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) lists sixty-four incidents in 2016, seventy-two in 2017, forty-one in 2018 and forty-nine in 2019.

Since the tally began in 2013, six hate crimes have occurred in London. In June 2016, for example, a thirty-eight-year-old white woman assaulted, spat on and repeatedly punched a woman wearing a *hijab* in the parking lot of a popular Asian wholesaler. "The woman then grabbed onto the victim's hijab and attempted to pull it off of her head before pulling the victim's hair" (NCCM, 2020). A month prior, a couple of twenty-four-year-olds showered an Iranian man sitting outside the Covent Garden Market with racial epithets; then they struck him, giving him a concussion. In December the following year, just outside of London in St. Thomas, a man with a baseball bat attacked a Colombian man and his family in a mall parking lot; he confused them for Muslims. He repeatedly shouted "ISIS" and "terrorists" as he broke the father's ribs with a baseball bat (Ibid). Then, in June 2019, a mosque near White Oaks was vandalized with graffiti reading "For the temple mouhamed (sic) rapes kids" (Ibid). Incidents such as these, widely shared through Whatsapp messenger, naturally create an atmosphere of

trepidation. My mother and her friends, for example, are intuitively aware that Muslims have the highest percentage of women victims (53%) among groups subject to hate (Noor Cultural Centre 2017, 7). Hence, they try to do their shopping during the day and in pairs.

In saying all this, I do not want to give the impression that White Oaks' Muslim groups are languishing, isolated and gripped by fear. Especially when compared to the vast majority of their relatives back home, they are flourishing. Indeed, they lead a comfortable if not lavish and largely safe, dignified existence. Instead, I wish to impart a sense of the opposition and social distancing between London's Muslim and majoritarian groups. In doing so, however, I also want to avoid the implication that the opposition between the groups is entirely a consequence of the conduct of the latter. Following Hage (2016, 45), I understand Islamophobia not as a "racist manufacturing of a nonexistent threat" but rather "a racist mode of coming to terms with a real threat" or challenge. Critical anti-Islamophobia discourses must take care not to represent the choice facing Muslims as one between being "ISIS scary or politically bland and nonscary" and instead "show that there are many ways of being politically Muslim [that] are scary in a good anticolonial way" (Ibid). By that token, White Oaks' Muslim groups' opposition to majoritarian Canada is not simply a reaction to its rejection of them. For instance, the Shia Lebanese opposition is a product of their belonging to the *hala*, the meaning they draw from its ideals of resistance, sacrifice and social justice (Al-Fartousi 2016, 217). For the children of the *hala*'s vanguard generation, though, the nature and import of their opposition to majoritarian Canadian is not necessarily clear. Among other things, this opposition is mediated by the need, especially important among minority youth, to gain the acceptance of their peers (Zine 2001, 404). And so, it plays out in their lives primarily as an antagonism between the sphere of home/family and the sphere of school/community (S. Abu-Laban and B. Abu-Laban 1999, 114).

In White Oaks, the Shia Lebanese are a minority within a larger Muslim community. Individual households act like nodes in a network that support the transmission of the *hala*'s horizon of meaning to the next generation. Additional strategies employed by households belonging to that network include: the establishment of informal and formal schools for religious and language instruction (Zine 2007); frequent phone calls to relatives in Lebanon (Haikkola 2011); summertime visits to natal villages (Kibria 2002); and monopolization of free time (Tastsoglou and Petrinioti 2011). The appreciation Shia Lebanese youth have for these efforts is, again, overshadowed by the hegemony of dominant groups and ideas, the influence of which they first encounter at school (Al-Fartousi 2016, 195). Hence, I argue, the occurrence of assimilation is not purely the "result of [one's] own intentionality of actions, though these are involved, but rather larger forces, something closer to what we might call destiny" (Miller 2008, 102). At least, this is my experience. Although my choice of social acceptance over marginality felt like my own, I have recently begun to unravel the forces that were at play in shaping it.

Phenomenology: More Hegel than Husserl

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to charting across four "inscapes" or phases of interiority the development in my understanding of the problem posed by assimilation, my understanding of the antagonism between the *hala*, the sphere of home/family, and majoritarian Canada, the sphere of school/society. It proceeds phenomenologically, in that I order and present this series of understandings "according to their necessity in which the imperfect ones dissolve and pass over into higher ones which constitute their next truth" (Hegel in Kaufmann 1965, 5). That is, I deploy a Hegelian, as opposed to a Husserlian, phenomenology; whereas the latter involves the representational analysis of already constituted cognitive objects, the former

emphasizes the process of their formation (Rockmore 2017, 81). I prefer Hegelian phenomenology here for the simple reason that it is better suited to conveying the trial and error involved in grasping the contents of my experience of assimilation, how they have changed with my stage of life, and the ideas I have used to grasp them. Husserl's phenomenology insists on "reduction" or rising above natural, worldly attitudes to the presuppositionless level of prima philosophia (Ibid, 77). Put plainly, what may appear as anachronism is really an earnest attempt to share an understanding of the problem of assimilation inclusive of its development. And if, as Hegel admits of the consciousnesses in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977), the phases of my understanding appear at times "unbalanced and a little ridiculous," I would suggest that they have lost to words the "fury of their whirl" (Kaufman 1965, 73).

The first inscape—Prevarication—relates my discovery of the problem posed by assimilation, the antagonism between the *hala* and majoritarian Canada. It spans ages five through thirteen but focuses especially on the events of the eighth grade, the year that drove a wedge between me and my parents. The second inscape—Detachment—relates my subsequent crisis of faith and assumption of a hypothetical attitude toward the traditions and customs of the *hala*. It spans ages fifteen through twenty-two, an era in which I associated the *hala* with heteronomy. The third inscape—Freedom—relates my brush with the dialectic of Enlightenment. It spans ages twenty-two through twenty-eight, a phase spent unpacking the heteronomy of Canadian multiculturalism. Finally, the fourth inscape—Objective Irony—relates my recent struggles with reflective scissiparity, a term to describe the paralysis of thought that Native Informants are threatened with by the power/knowledge nexus. It returns the reader to the questions I raised in the introduction, those pertaining to the possibility of undoing the effects of my assimilation and how the efforts of my education might be redirected toward that undoing.

Inscape I: Prevarication

"…if a child has been brought up in complicated domestic circumstances, he employs falsehood, naturally and unconsciously says whatever best suits his interests; a sense of truth and a hatred of falsehood are quite foreign and unknown to him, and so he lies in all innocence."

(Nietzsche 2008, 47)

I first became conscious of the problem of assimilation in the eighth grade. Prior to then my sense of identity was exclusively resourced from the sphere of family/home. I was only too happy to practice my Arabic literacy, speak to relatives in Lebanon on the phone and perform the acts of piety expected of me. I remember, for example, my first day at the Islamic Sunday school, which I began attending at the *hussainiyah* when I was eight; I was thrilled to call home at lunch to tell my mother I had memorized the *fatiha* (the first seven verses of the Quran). I can still hear her exclaiming "good job, *habibi*", with an excitement that exceeded my own. When I returned home that afternoon, the air was warm from the *sfoof*, a traditional Lebanese almond-semolina turmeric cake that she had baked for me. According to prominent developmental psychologist Jerome Kagan (1999, 164; see also Grusec and Davidov 2010, Grusec and Goodnow 1994, and Sears 1957), interactions such as these between parents and young children, ones in which desirable actions are rewarded, involve the transfer of knowledge and values. They have a cumulative effect whereby children come to "feel an imperative to honor" their parents' class, ethnic or religious identifications (Ibid, 165). This transfer of identifications is especially critical in an immigrant context where parents are the primary source of them (Ajrouch 1999, 129). After I turned thirteen, however, the imperative to honour my parents' identifications began to appear less categorical; as an adolescent my concern with age-peers was heightened.

This shift in focus exposed me, as predicted by B. and S. Abu-Laban (1999, 141), to modes of thinking and experience that were “sharply at odds” with what I was learning at home.

Scenes

Before the eighth grade, I had only one companion who was neither a child of my parents’ friends nor a *talab* (student) from the *hussainiyah,* a half-Canadian half-Palestinian boy named Zakaria. We were quiet, demure boys who first bonded in school over *Nate the Great,* a series of children’s detective stories in which the titular Nate solves neighbourhood mysteries with his dog Sludge. On the weekends we would run around the ravine near Zakaria’s duplex, inventing mysteries and solving them before rewarding ourselves with a handsome stack of pancakes, as Nate did. As we grew older, we moved on to other series, from the Great Illustrated Classics easy-to-read adaptations of novels like *Moby Dick* (Melville 1851) to *Harry Potter* (Rowling 1997) and then *Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien 2007). Our bookish ways marked us as relative outsiders, but we hardly noticed. We were perfectly content as a twosome, at least until we developed an interest in the opposite sex. With this development our concern over our popularity predictably mushroomed. At White Oaks P.S. in the early 2000s the quickest way to acquire popularity and, crucially for Zakaria and me, access to social interaction with girls was joining a “scene.” As studies of suburban youth have shown (for example see Jagodzinski 2004 and 2005, Shank 1994, Gaines 1994 and Mitchell 2006), adolescent peer groups typically organize themselves according to music scenes that delimit “dress and deportment” in exchange for “cultural resources” (Peterson and Bennett 2004, 2). Two scenes were available to us: gangsta rap and pop-punk.

The first scene orbited around artists such as Eminem, 50 Cent, the Diplomats and Jay-Z. Its members, mostly immigrant youths from West Indian, South East Asian and Arab

backgrounds, presented with baggy jeans, long crewneck t-shirts, gold chains and basketball sneakers. They deliberately spoke in a pseudo-African American patois, were oppositional with teachers and stylized themselves as members of a gang, the White Oaks Crew (WOC), emphasizing loyalty and defense of local territory. Jagodzinski (2005, 77) explains these characteristics of the gangsta rap scene as a product of its affinity to "the mack style [of the] strong-willed and aggressive male who disdains women." In so doing, Jagodzinski overlooks how the scene's masculinity is significantly conditioned by relations of ethnicity and class. Poynting, Noble and Tabar (1999) do an exceptional job of investigating how these elements intersect in their study of a western Sydney Lebanese youth gang called *shi be faz'i* (SBF) or "something that terrifies." The authors depict the youths' masculine aggression as defensive, an exaggerated reassertion of dignity in the face of class and race-based antagonisms (Ibid, 62). "It is as if, in experiencing diminution as humans…these young men are experiencing diminution as men: offence to their humanity is an affront to their manhood" (Ibid, 73). When SBF members patrolled their neighbourhood and sought out brawls with "rich" or "stuck up" Anglo-Australians, it was in order to invert the relations of power that humiliated them, to conceal from themselves the extent of this humiliation through an elaborate camera obscura (Ibid, 69).

I understand the WOC's expressions of masculinity in similar terms, as a defense against ethnic relations and those who subordinate them in class, whether that be teachers, other students or gangs from different parts of town. While ethnicity may not appear as immediately significant or unifying to the WOC as it is to "the Lebs" of SBF, the latter included a Syrian, two Greeks and an Italian (Ibid, 65). As the most predominant minority group in Sydney, the struggle of the "Lebs" offers other subordinated individuals a way to frame their own experience of marginality, just as the African American struggle (as portrayed by the gangsta rap scene) does in North

American contexts. Of course, none of this was apparent to Zakaria and I at the time. All we needed to know was that, as was the case with SBF, “nerds” like us who displayed “deprecated styles of masculinity” were not welcome (Ibid).

Our only option, then, was the pop-punk scene, an iteration of the punk scene (following the New York, English, California Hardcore, Washington, D.C. straight edge, New York Second Wave and Riot Grrrl scenes) that emerged out of Berkeley in the mid-1990s. Musically, it harkened back to “a Ramones-influenced three-chord (verse-chorus-verse)…radio-friendly style,” was “deliberately silly” and a-political (Thompson 2004, 73). Although it was as male dominant as the gangsta-rap scene, its expression of masculinity was distinguished by its combination of “adolescent heterosexuality…with a repressed male homoeroticism as normative” (Ibid, 74). The scene’s ideal peer group, stylized not after urban gangs but the significantly less aggressive “Jackass” style prankster troupe, suited the two of us more. It was also clearly the scene most preferred by our almost (with the exception of one) exclusively white and middle-class teachers, having themselves grown up as fans of guitar-laden genres of music. Not for the last time, my predilection for being a teacher’s pet had the effect of being a “filter for ethnicity” (S. Abu-Laban and B. Abu Laban 1999, 118). No sooner had Zakaria and I begun to adorn ourselves with band-tees (NOFX, Green Day, Bad Religion, Rancid), studded belts and skate shoes, than we found ourselves surrounded by new friends including, for the first time, members of the opposite sex. Our surprising social success spurred us on to buy and pirate all the requisite CDs, consume the ancillary media generated around them and, after a little while, start a band of our own. It was at this point that the change in my appearance and deportment caught the attention of my parents, leading to the beginning of a protracted confrontation with them.

The moment I informed my mother of my intention to join a band, things changed between my parents and me, when the extent, though not the nature, of their opposition to majoritarian Canada became clear. "Music is *haram*," she explained, "it promotes improper relations between boys and girls. Sayyid al-Sistani forbids it."[55] Her words were wrenching. With them, I felt as though all my social advancement had been jeopardized. "How can music be *haram*? Because some guy wearing a turban in Iraq says so?" Without so much as a response from my mother I knew that a line had been crossed. It was too late—the matter would be brought to my father's attention.[56] With a furrowed brow and crossed arms I waited for him to return from the bakery. When he entered my room, he was still in his apron, pants covered in flour and as cross as I'd ever seen him. Without reference to the earlier interaction between my mother and me, he asked that I recite the *fatiha* and I obliged. "*bismi lahi rahmani rahim, al hamdu lillahi rabbi l'alamin, 'ar rahmani rahim, maliki yawmi din, iyyaki na'budu wa'iyyaka nasta'in, 'ihdina sirata lmustaqim*." He waved his hand. "Stop there. Do you know what *sirata lmustaqim* means?" I shrugged. "It means the straight path. And when you read the *fatiha* you are making a pledge to God that you will remain on it, which in your case implies rising above social pressures at school. You must not allow yourself to be confused by your classmates about who you really are." With a stern voice he explained that, as a thirteen-year-old, I was now

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[55] Most Shia Lebanese of my parents' generation are *muqallid* (conform) to Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani (1930-) (Walbridge 1999, 56).

[56] Concerning the stereotype of the domineering Arab father I would like to draw a distinction between the patrilineal structure of the Arab family and patriarchy more generally. While patriarchy, the vesting of power in senior male family members, may exist in Arab families it is a phenomenon of family relations that can also be observed across many other cultures. It is not, as Kristine Arjouch (1999, 131) puts it, "the underlying, definitive factor that organizes the Arab family." That factor can be better defined as patrilineality, a family structure characterized by extension through the father. "Within this type of family organization, all persons know to which group they belong. It is assigned at birth…Family members assume a responsibility for one another. Men and women have definitive rights and duties. The actions of individuals in the family come to represent the entire family. Whether someone in the family acts positively or negatively, the entire family is implicated, and in this manner, the family name is established" (Ibid, 130).

mukallaf[57] or obligated to perform the religious duties of a Shia man. They included the five daily prayers—which Shia typically perform over three sessions by combining *zuhr* (noon) and *'asr* (afternoon) as well as *maghrib* (sunset) and *'isha* (night)—ablutions; fasting for the month of Ramadan; and purity laws. This last requirement was the hardest to accept, for in addition to dietary restrictions (no pork, no alcohol, etc.), it involved avoiding casual physical contact with members of the opposite sex, the very thing I desired most at that point in my development. Not only were dating and premarital sex out of the question, but so too was a simple handshake or high-five. Before leaving my room, my father asked me to take down the posters of the "*shayatin*" (demons) I had pinned up on the wall.

The next day I went to school in my old attire, defeated and incredibly envious of Zakaria. I was envious of the absence from his life of his Palestinian father, of how the spheres of home/family and school/society were consequently in sync for him. I did not spare any thought for what it must have been like for him to grow up in a single-parent home. All I could think of was the humiliation of having to explain to our new friends why I could no longer be a member of our band. In the post-9/11 moment, having to draw attention to my religion in this manner was deeply regrettable. Smarting from the ignominy, I decided to hide out at school among fellow Muslims.

As Zine (2001, 401) has documented, there are Muslim students in Canadian schools who do manage to stay on *sirata lmustaqim*. By high school especially, some of us had grown comfortable enough to maintain openly Islamic lifestyles. In the eighth grade, however, this was

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[57] To be a *mukallaf* is to be subject to Islamic or *sharia* law. One normally gains *taklif* or legal autonomy following puberty, when a child is said to have acquired enough maturity and discernment (*tamyiz*) to answer to their own actions. Prior to this development the parents are legally responsible for the comportment of their children (Arabi 2011). How *taklif* is marked and communicated is of course a matter of varied local interpretation. In my case it is in the context of relations with non-Muslim peers that the responsibilities of *taklif* were defined.

not so. None of us then had the strength to resist the pressures to fit in. Indeed, although I turned to my Muslim peers for positive peer pressure, a sense of being held accountable at school for what was expected of me at home, I received quite the opposite. Confessing to one another our forbidden desires gave them a sense of normalcy. What's more, we realized that we could use one another as cover for unapproved activities involving a mixed gender group. What we gained from one another, put otherwise, was the brazenness to indulge in what has been referred to as a "double persona" (Ibid, 406), whereby Muslim youth develop one identity for school and the wider community and another for their family. As I gained confidence in my ability to avoid being caught by my parents, bolstered by a sense of mutually assured destruction I shared with my co-conspirators, the extent of my experimentation increased. Before long I had rejoined Zakaria and the band, practicing and playing off-tune covers for our friends using instruments borrowed from Mr. Lystra, the music teacher. Meanwhile, my parents believed I was playing soccer with Mohammed or on a marathon bike ride with Shady.

Honour Codes

My double persona, punk on the one side and pious on the other, continued to work in my favour until Nassim, the eldest son of an older couple close to my parents, found out that his secret Canadian girlfriend was pregnant. Touching "upon two extremely sensitive topics in Islamic tradition, namely the close relationship with believers of other religions (specifically Jews and Christians) on the one hand and the autonomous status and free choice of Muslim women on the other," pre-marital and "interfaith" intimacy is, for the first generation especially, the common practice of majoritarian Canada that is most taboo (Buisson 2017, 430). While I had a clear idea of the religious injunctions against this type of intimacy, I had not considered the interaction of those injunctions with honour codes. To my horror, Nassim's parents

excommunicated him. They forced their teenage son out of the *hala* and into a "not-community," not unlike the one to which Indian intercaste and interfaith couples are relegated (Verma and Sukhramani 2017; see also Chopra and Punwani 2005, Moody 2008 and Ansari and Anjum 2013). I realized then that the anxiety my parents exhibited around issues of my conformity had at least as much to do with their own honour as it did my salvation.



Figure 7: White Oaks Public School after the 1998 Renovations
(Source: Personal library)

Arab honour codes have been discussed at length in terms of women and their roles in the family (see Goodwin 1994, Ginat 1997 and Baron 2006). For example, in Ajrouch's (1999, 131)

study of a presumably Shia Lebanese community in Dearborn, Michigan (she describes them only as Muslim but places their natal villages in the Southern Province) we are told that

> the main reason for a girl's restricted activity has to do with the concept of honor. The notion of family honor is directly linked to the chastity of its female members. Specifically, it is her sexual conduct which must be guarded. Because of the patrilineal nature of the Arab family, it is important for family honor and for family responsibility; responsibility and group membership derive from the paternity of a child. Chastity and honor become imperative qualities for the female.

I do not wish to contest the notion that parents like mine are, for the reasons stated above, in general more permissive with their sons than they are with their daughters. The young women who belonged to the *hala* were mostly not afforded enough leeway to sneak around behind their parents' backs and experiment, at least not outside of school. And those who wore the *hijab*, unable to conform to the aesthetics of either scene, were excluded from those interactions at school in which one would be tempted to do so. Nevertheless, I was surprised by Ajrouch's (Ibid, 137) finding that for males dating was only frowned upon (see also Tastsoglou and Petrinioti 2011, 189 and S. Abu-Laban and B. Abu-Laban 1999, 124). While this type of double standard regarding dating may exist in certain families, I would hesitate to draw Arjouch's (1999, 138) conclusion that "immigrant families hold onto their…ethnicity through their daughters and strive to attain the American dream through their sons." In my experience, males within the boundaries of the *hala* were also subject to an honour code that explicitly prohibited not just dating but casual physical contact of any sort with women outside one's *mahrem* (the category of people one cannot marry). The extreme scrutiny of my comportment following Nassim's indiscretion attests to this.[58]

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[58] In a recent volume edited by Mohammad Mazher Idriss (2020), the issue of men and boy victims of honour-based abuse—assault, blackmail, coercive control, false imprisonment, forced marriage and kidnapping—has at long last been recognized and competently addressed. Like Idriss (Ibid, 13) and the contributors to his volume, I wish to make it clear that my intention is not to minimise whatsoever the impact of honour-based abuse on women and girls. Nor

Suddenly I was no longer allowed to leave the house without direct approval from my father and my actions were incessantly questioned. Had I prayed? Was I washing properly? What was I doing on the computer? Who did I walk home from school with? While the exact form of censure I faced was unclear, I could not be sure that my parents would behave differently from Nassim's if I were to bring upon them a similar kind of shame. And yet, not only did I carry on lying to them, about where I was, who I was with and what we were doing, but I felt entirely justified in doing so. Why should I be kept from partaking in activities as mundane as community center dances or a female classmate's birthday party? Because someone my parents know might catch sight of me doing so? What kind of a religion would have it that the love between a parent and their child depends on such shallow appearances? It struck me as bitterly ironic that as the younger generation covered and looked out for one another our parents seemed to be out to "gotcha" each other. It was hard to avoid the implication that at some level they took pleasure in catching us behaving improperly in public, that we were pawns in their sick and twisted honour games. In their study of Edmonton's Arab immigrant communities, B. and S. Abu-Laban (1999, 149) found that the "generational tension" arising from parents' proclivity for "gossiping" was "neither pervasive nor constant." Here again I must beg to differ. So pervasive was this tension that it became a fixture of the Muslim student stereotype, something our peers

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do I deny that men are primary perpetrators of that abuse. I merely wish to contribute to a conversation about how young Muslim men and boys in the West also struggle with the pressure to assume prescribed gender roles, and that they experience that struggle within the paradigm of honour codes. Moreover, I do not believe that the pressure to uphold the family name needs to be abusive in nature for it to have a detrimental effect. I would not consider myself a victim of abuse, but I do recognize the impact of those years of over anxiousness on, for example, my ability to regulate my mood. This is the element I wish to really highlight, the extensive stress and paranoia of being caught out by either your parents or their friends, the nervousness that breeds. And again, this nervousness need not be an outcome of abuse. I worried about being outcasted like Nassim, yes, but I also worried about upsetting my mother, because I knew how much she was also concerned with me being caught out. She would say things like, "Do you want people to laugh at my *hijab*? To ask me why I bother wearing it?" There was a clear sense of my actions being an extension of her practice of modesty, that they had the potential of undoing it. There was a sense of shame.

and teachers would tease us about. For those of us who were the subjects of this gossip, however, it was anything but humorous. Every man with a beard and every woman wearing a *hijab* had to be considered a potential informant.

Within the boundaries of White Oaks, paranoia reigned. The most high-risk areas included the parking lot after school, grocery stores and White Oaks Mall. It was outside the latter that I was caught with my guard down. After class one afternoon late in the spring, my friend Walid and I were seen by his mother engaging in casual physical contact with two female classmates. I remember the panic on Walid's face as he met her glare from across the Walmart parking lot. Incensed by her son's attempt to flee, the *haji* (a term for a woman who has performed the pilgrimage of *hajj*) removed her sandal and catapulted it toward Walid, striking him in the back.[59] Jen and Courtney peeled over with laughter, but I was petrified. I knew that I too was within the *haji*'s range. As I feared she would, *um* Walid turned to me before dragging my embarrassed friend away by his ear and said, "'*hala' lan shuf shu btihki imak*" (let's see what your mom has to say about this). I took my time walking home, as if my path was death row, stopping every now and again to sit and play with the grass. Was I going to be excommunicated like Nassim? Where would I live? With Zakaria? Maybe a teacher? I was prepared for any outcome.

As I walked in through the front door, I could sense that *um* Walid's call had already been received. Normally there would be food on the table and Arabic-dubbed Turkish soap operas on the television. Instead, I found only a discarded cup of Nescafe on the kitchen counter and an irking silence. I tip-toed down the stairs to my room in the basement, where my parents

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[59] Recall Iraqi broadcast journalist Muntadar al-Zeidi hurling his shoe at U.S. President George W. Bush in December 2008. In the Arab world, to show one the bottom of your foot is considered an insult.

were waiting for me. Evidently, they had gone through my things and found the notes from Courtney, which I had hidden in a pencil case. “Do you realize that every time you touch one of these girls you negate my prayers? That you make a mockery of my *hijab*?” Tears trickled down my mother’s cheeks as she spoke. My instinct was to concoct some sort of fabrication that would prevent the escalation, but it was too late, there was nothing I could say. “You show us no respect,” my father chimed in; “for the remainder of the school year you will come straight home after class. You will not use the phone or the computer. You will do your schoolwork and study the Quran. Then, you will spend the summer in Lebanon.” It appeared that I had been spared excommunication at the cost of social death. I was furious. Why did they bother bringing us to Canada in the first place if everything about life there was so offensive to them? It was not lost on me that in any normal Canadian household, awkward love letters passed between two young classmates would not only be considered inoffensive but likely endearing. At school the next day I carried myself as if I were Nelson Mandela, a political prisoner of an apartheid regime; my friends paid solemn tribute to me as I pledged to remain steadfast in the face of arbitrary detention.



Figure 8: White Oaks Mall
(Source: Personal library)

Homeland Visit

The year soon came to a draw and, as promised, I was flown to Beirut directly following my graduation from middle school. Kibria (2002, 297) defines "homeland visits" as "voluntary… fairly short in duration and generally focus[ed] on such goals as tourism, leisure, seeing family and friends, and learning, discovering or rediscovering the cultural aspects and other elements of ancestral society." I had been on several such visits to Lebanon prior to being outed by *um* Walid, but always with my parents and with a two-way ticket. Now, though, my parents refused to commit to a return date. "Later" was all they offered. Prior to my visit in the summer of 2004, I had never experienced a visit to Lebanon as punishment. In the past I had

looked forward to going there, to being reunited on vacation with my large loving family (my parents each have seven siblings, most of them with their own children). This time around, the obvious intention of my parents to combat my Westernization tempered my excitement. It was clear that they intended for my visit to produce what Low (1992, 173) describes as an intense and lasting experience of the homeland, of "the idea of [it] and its religious, spiritual, or sociopolitical importance." I had resolved to resist it.

Half my time was spent with my maternal relatives in Haret Hreik and the other with my paternal ones in the Biqa'. In either case I found myself imbued with the *hala* to an extent that was impossible to replicate in White Oaks. For seven weeks I was immersed in my family, their tribal flags and memorials. In my interactions with all sorts of people, the Party of God**,** its liberation of the south and charismatic Secretary General who, I was told, is a direct descendent of the Prophet, were feelingly extolled. A paternal aunt went as far as to suggest that Hassan Nasrallah could be the occulted twelfth Imam, Mahdi, in disguise. In Dahieh a maternal uncle drove me around, pointing out all the improvements to the landscaping implemented by the Hizballah mayor including traffic islands, crossways, and gardens. He then took me to a sponsored hospital, a school for orphans and a library. A paternal uncle likewise took me on a walk through our natal village, pointing out that the roads had been widened and paved. "We finally have a water treatment facility!"[60] I sensed everyone's pride in these developments, which

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[60] As Mona Harb (2009) has documented, Hizballah mayors maintain a stellar reputation for good governance. This is no small feat in a country where corruption is the order of the day, and where its resources are controlled and doled out by the (male) heads of the most powerful families. For example, "in the arena of local development, officials of public agencies, such as the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), and the ministries concerned often stress the professionalism and concern for the efficiency of the mayors of Hizballah. This recognition appears moreover in the recommendations they address to international donors who are looking for local partners for the implementation of their development aid programs" (Ibid 14). The municipality of Ghobeyri, Dahieh's largest, has worked with "UNICEF, UNDP and UN-Habitat as well as with Arab (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia) and European donors. Donors, for their part, are encouraged by the very position reputation of the [Hizballah] mayor and the municipal council which has earned Ghobeyri the United Nations Best Practices designation" (Ibid 29).

suggested that through Hizballah they themselves had a direct hand in them. If the party and its agents were forthright, steadfast, modern and effective (powerful), then so too were my relatives. I was being invited to likewise see Hizballah's impressive feats as my own.[61]

In turns, each of my aunties and uncles pulled me aside and reminded me, in a gentle manner that contrasted sharply with my parents' increasingly anxious prompts, of the importance of reciting my prayers, performing *wudu'* (ritual purification) and that gendered relations with *ajaneeb* (foreigners) were taboo. My cousins in the Biqa' made empirical arguments for the existence of God, rooted in beauty, consciousness and design, while my cosmopolitan Beiruti cousins made ontological ones like Pascal's wager. Gradually my resistance to the value and appeal of the beliefs, traditions and social issues they stressed to me declined. Everything that seemed so aberrant or peculiar about them in Canada was normal and expected there in Lebanon's Shia territories (Kibria 2002, 305). The visit was having the desired effect. Not only was I feeling greater empathy for the *hala* but also a strong sense of belonging. "You are one of us," I was told repeatedly; "no matter what, that's what you will be." Overwhelmed by this "promise of true belonging" (Ibid, 303), I pledged that I would quit my moral lethargy, be assiduous with my ablutions, complete my prayers on time and commit to practicing social

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Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah demands that his party's Municipal Labor Committee, "a central structure whose vocation is to supervise and 'guide' (*Irshad*) its municipal councils," work with private auditing companies (Ibid 9-10). In 2004 Nasrallah outlined the objectives of the Municipal Labor Community: to "reinforce the administrative functioning of the municipality according to the laws and plan municipal work according to well defined and budgeted programs; consolidate municipal resources; ensure the efficiency of the municipal council and meet the expectations of voters; give priority to development projects within the framework of master plans; promote environmental and social policies, in particular educational projects and programs for young people, women, the elderly, the disadvantaged and the disabled; encourage the society of Resistance" (Ibid 10).

[61] According to Hage (2009, 67), what motivates individuals to identify with a collective is precisely this acquisition of capacities or potentials. The "'I' by imaging itself [for example] through the national 'we' can acquire powers it cannot dream of having by simply imagining itself as an individual 'I'." Here Hage is evoking Spinoza (1996), for whom the "state of perfection" consists of having total power over one's environment, as well as Benedict Anderson (1983**)** to make the point that Shia Lebanese not only identify with Hizballah but "through it." We will return to this point later on in the chapter.

distancing from females outside the family. Deep down though I knew how difficult it would be to keep on *sirata lmustaqim* once I returned to Canada. I feared the forthcoming test of my resolve to such an extent that when I was at last offered a return date, I cried and begged to stay. What I wanted more than anything else was the comfort and predictability of a "seamless transition between the values, beliefs, and practices of the home and school environment," the type of transition which, I had realized, London could never offer me (Zine 2007, 72).

Denouement

Prevarication is the inscape from which there first emerged the problem of assimilation: the antagonism between the *hala*, the sphere of home/family, and majoritarian Canada, the sphere of school/society. It is the phase in which I was taught to "fix [my] 'differentness' by means of a critical and deprecatory discourse vis-à-vis the 'Other,' the Westerner, whom '[I] must never resemble'" (Ramadan 2004, 128). It began when, as an adolescent, my concern with my age-peers at White Oaks P.S. became heightened, when in order to interact with members of the opposite sex I joined the pop-punk scene. My parents, worried that I was straying off *sirata lmustaqim*, responded by exerting substantial pressure on me to retain the earlier compliance of my childhood. This much could have been predicted by existing research: the varying valuations of assimilation within my family unit would lead to conflict (Tastsoglou and Petrinioti 2011 and Hayani 1999); that the points of opposition between the spheres of home/family and school/society would crystallize around issues of gender mixing and interfaith intimacy (S. Abu-Laban and B. Abu-Laban 1999 and Abdelhady 2010); and that my struggle to negotiate a Shia Lebanese identity in relation to the dominant group would lead to my adoption of a double persona (B. Abu-Laban and S. Abu-Laban 1999 and Al-Fartousi 2016). However, researchers fail to predict the extent of the impact of the events of grade eight on my relationship to my

parents and the *hala*. B. and S. Abu-Laban (1999, 150), for instance, declare that their Edmonton survey results do "not show intense and insurmountable generational conflict that pits youth against parents." The points of opposition between the spheres of home/family and school/society that emerged during my adolescence were not contained to that period of development. Rather it is a feature of my life which, not without incident, extends to the present day.

Inscape II: Detachment

"…surely it is one of the unhappiest characteristics of the age to have produced more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles than ever before in history…Yet it is no exaggeration to say that liberation as an intellectual…has now shifted from the settled, established, and domesticated dynamics of culture to its unhoused, decentered and exilic energies, energies whose incarnation today is the migrant, and whose consciousness is that of the intellectual and artist in exile…between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages."

(Said 1994, 332)

Now fourteen, I returned to London two days before I was scheduled to begin high school. As White Oaks. P.S. was the main feeder school for Westminster Secondary, the majority of the other incoming grade nines had previously been classmates of mine. Given that I did not want to add social uncertainty to an already abrupt and daunting transition, I decided that while keeping to *sirata lmustaqim* I would try also to remain friends with Zakaria and the other scene kids. I soon learned though that the scene had amped up over the summer, in ways that made consorting with my old friends problematic. They had picked up habits like stealing bottles from their parents' liquor cabinets and smoking marijuana. Moreover, dating no longer implied only hand holding and note passing. By way of prioritizing the promise that I had made to myself back in Lebanon, I extracted myself entirely from the scene. Otherwise, I thought, I would risk falling back into my old habit of prevarication, my double persona. For companionship I turned instead to Westminster Secondary's Muslim Students' Association (MSA), where I found

likeminded students including a number of other Shia Lebanese. Unlike the previous time I had turned to other Muslim students for positive peer pressure, in high school I found a much stouter resistance against social pressures, especially among the older students.

waswâsah

Despite extracting myself from the kinds of social circles at school that might tempt me to stray from *sirata lmustaqim*, I soon became overwhelmed by intrusive thoughts of disbelief and obsessions related to matters of ablution and worship. When I brought the matter to my father, he smiled and said, “These are the Devil’s whispers, *habibi*. He wishes to make worship difficult for you and entice you into acting against Allah. Don’t fret, we all hear these *waswâsah* (whisperings). They are a simple test of your faith.” As G. Hussein Rassool (2018, 147) explains, *waswâs l’khannas* (whispering of the devil) is mentioned in the Quran as a test that all believers will be subjected to. However, in some cases, as in mine, these *waswâsah* become obsessions that seriously interfere with daily activities and responsibilities. In these instances, it is said of the individual that they suffer from *waswâs al-qahri* (overwhelming whisperings), a particular manifestation of obsessive-compulsive disorder that is found in Muslim populations (Ibid). These pathological *waswâsah* are defined by N. Awad (2017, 4) as “intrusive thoughts that cause cognitive dissonance (mental distress due to contradictory beliefs, values, or thoughts), and pose a risk to a person’s spiritual and psychological homeostasis.” Three variations have been identified in clinical settings relating to *aqeedah* (belief), *ibadah* (worship) and *taharah* (purification) (Rassool 2018, 150). *waswâs fee aqeedah* present as intrusive, negative thoughts regarding one’s faith or particular aspects of the Islamic belief system, *fee ibadah* as doubts over one’s performance of compulsory acts of worship like daily prayers and fasting, and *fee taharah*

as obsessions over the state of purification of one’s body, clothes and places of prayer (Ibid, 151-4). Unfortunately, I fell victim to all three.

In terms of *taharah* or purification, the *waswâsah* I heard made me question whether or not I had performed the ablutions required before prayer correctly and if so whether I had nullified them by passing wind. The more attention I paid to them, the more frequently they occurred. To cope I began compulsively performing *wudu’*, the partial ablution reserved for minor impurities (*najasat*) like urination, defecation or deep sleep, before eventually progressing to compulsive performances of *ghusl*, a complete ablution or ritual bath normally reserved for greater impurities like bleeding or ejaculation (Maghen 2007). At their worst the *waswâsah* would drag out the process of purifying myself before prayer for upwards of an hour, after which I was subjected to a different set. When it came to *ibadah* or worship the greatest source of anxiety was the recitation of prayers, specifically whether or not I had missed a *raka’ah* (unit of prayer). For example, the *fajr* (morning) prayer consists of four. While performing it, the *waswâsah* would make me second guess what number I was on, forcing me to repeat my prayers, again and again until they were satisfied. Just as with my ablutions, I knew full well that I had performed all the *raka’ah* and in the correct order. The torment came from the fact that I could not convince myself of this. I tried ignoring the *waswâsah* but I could not bear the risk of having my prayers nullified by a missed ablution or *raka’ah*.

By far the most distressing of the *waswâsah*, though, were those related to *aqeedah* or belief. Unlike *waswâs fee tahara* or *waswâs fee ibada*, these were not contained to a particular activity. They were liable to intrude and levy a terrible pang of conscience at any moment, blasphemous thoughts regarding the existence of Allah or the righteousness of His word. A little voice would ask, “What are the odds that Islam is the one true religion?” or “if the Bible and

Torah have been corrupted, what prevents the corruption of the Quran?" Other times it would ask, "How is it acceptable for your paternal uncle to have two wives? What does that say about the treatment of women in Islam?" or "what if you were gay? Would your parents not abandon you?" To make matters worse, there was no ritual I could perform to appease these *waswâsah*. All I could try to do was avoid situations which might provoke them. No easy task with liberal arts—English, Media Studies, Civics, Geography and History—accounting for so much of the curriculum at Westminster Secondary. Something as benign as a conversation about gender roles in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee 1960), about Scout's unwillingness to conform to the standards of lady-like behaviour in the American South that Mrs. Dubose held her to, might set off a series of *waswâsah* that could ensnare me in some labyrinthian pattern of rumination for as long as a couple of weeks, during which time I would be stricken by anxiety, isolated and sullen.

The more routine this became the more desperately I clung to refrains like "you cannot judge Islam by the selective readings of its practitioners" or "questioning the wisdom of Allah is foolhardy. It is impossible to comprehend all that He sees." But like some antibiotic resistant strain of bacteria, the *waswâsah* adapted to my ready-made rejoinders. "What good is a religion that can be interpreted in such a variety of ways? One that sanctions polygyny in one instance and unconscionable acts of political violence in another?" I considered asking my parents for help, but I worried that they would interpret the persistence of the *waswâsah* as weakness, an inability on my part to ward off the Devil's advances. I tried instead to broach the topic with my friends in the MSA, but I failed to communicate to them the magnitude of my problem. In any case, the only advice they could offer was to keep Allah close, to pray the *waswâsah* away. And so, I resigned myself to concealing my struggle, to suffering the *waswâsah*, an incessant test of my faith, in silence.

Multiculturalism

For the best part of my first two years of high school I succeeded in hiding my despondency, from everyone save my grade ten history teacher. One day after class, a class I had spent preoccupied with some blasphemy, Mr. Smith held me back and asked if something was the matter. After some cajoling, I answered honestly. I told him that I was constantly worried about losing control and doing something that Allah would never forgive me for, that my parents would be held accountable for my sins, and that I would be the reason why we all went to hell. “That’s a lot to manage on your own,” he said, “I think we should book you an appointment with the school counselor.” During our meeting the next day, the counselor, Mrs. Burke, asked me a series of questions that I could tell were intended to assess whether or not I was safe at home. Once satisfied, she then had me recall my interaction with Mr. Smith and expand on certain points. She took notes as I spoke before offering her counsel. “What you are experiencing is, in a way, quite common. Within immigrant families one often finds a very pronounced desire to maintain their original culture and religion is a big part of that.[62] It’s really a desire for a sense of

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[62] Tariq Ramadan (2004, 214) is at pains to establish that “Islam is not a culture. Whether we like it or not, the essence of Islam is religious…To speak of Islam is first of all to speak of faith, spirituality, and ethics, which together make up a conception of humankind and of life.” He is keen on making this distinction because he seeks to uproot Islam from its cultures of origin, so that second generation immigrants in Europe or the Americas can be Muslim without having to be “Pakistani, Arab, or Turkish” too (Ibid, 215). Ramadan (Ibid) explains: “the Muslim women and men who emigrated from, for example, Pakistan, Algeria, Morocco, Turkey or Guyana brought with them not only the memory of the universal principles of Islam but also, quite naturally, the way of life they followed in those countries…They tried, without really being aware of it, to continue to be Pakistani Muslims in Britain or the United States, Moroccan or Algerian Muslims in France, Turkish Muslims in Germany, and so on. It is with the emergence of the second and third generations that problems appeared, and the questions arose: parents who saw their children losing, or no longer recognized themselves as part of, their Pakistani, Arab, or Turkish culture seemed to think they were losing their religious identity at the same time. However, this was far from being the case: many young Muslims, by studying their religion, claimed total allegiance to Islam while distancing themselves from their cultures of origin.” For Ramadan the problem of assimilation is partially rooted in the conflation by the first generation of culture and religion. According to the principle of *tawhid*, simply put the absolute oneness of God, he aims to distill Islam into a set of universal or context-independent principles (Ibid, 12). While I certainly respect Ramadan’s interpretation and understanding of Islam, far more educated than my own, I cannot say that I agree with the implication that I would have felt less alienated from my faith had it not been conveyed to me in a Lebanese manner. In fact, it was the cultural aspects I was most attached to, the food, the symbols, the stories and all the linguistic frills. More importantly though, it is unclear to me how one can in any meaningful way have a conception

familiarity in new settings that can be wildly unfamiliar. That's why parents such as yours tend to be stricter abroad than they might otherwise be back home. I think the stress that you find yourself under is a product of the differences between your family and the rest of the community being overemphasized. What I would like to say to you, Ali, is that you really don't have to choose between being either Lebanese or Canadian. You can do both. That's the great thing about multiculturalism. Without doing anything that might upset your parents, I'd like you to open up to different groups around school."

I thought over Mrs. Burke's advice for a few days. What if, rather than being the Devil's whisperings, the *waswâsah* were, as the counselor had hinted, a product of me demonizing the influence of all the people, perspectives and practices that ran counter to the *hala*? If doing so is what made practicing my faith so difficult, such an anxious and trying affair for me, would it not be wise to instead try to negotiate those influences? If de-emphasizing the antagonism between the spheres of home/family and school/society could help me stay on *sirata lmustaqim* in the long run, I decided, then it was certainly worth a try. In any case, I missed my old friends, Zakaria especially. But how might he react to my reaching out after such a lengthy period of giving him the cold shoulder? To my pleasant surprise he welcomed me back to the scene with open arms. When I apologized for freezing him out, he told me not to worry about it, and said he figured I was "going through some stuff." What's more, he was entirely accepting of my decision to lead an outwardly Islamic life. Indeed, Zakaria and the scene kids proved to be

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of humankind and of life that is divorced from local expression. Or, more assertively, I doubt very much that such a conception would be particularly motivating. Just why that is will soon be made evident but for now allow me to confess once more an understanding of the relationship between religion and culture that is more aligned with Clifford Geertz' (1973) than Ramadan's. "Together with common sense, art, science, and ideology, religion constitutes a 'cultural system.' Cultural systems, as systems, are not just parts of culture but organized parts…they both make sense of life and convey the sense made" (Segal 2012, 512).

remarkably accommodating. Whenever I was invited out by them, they would let me know ahead of time if they were planning on consuming alcohol or watching a film that might offend my sensibilities. If I needed to pray, they would help me find a clean and private place to do so. And if it was Ramadan, they would do their best to refrain from eating or drinking in my presence, so as not to tempt me.

In turn I too made concessions. I might not listen along to Bad Religion or partake in reciting Leftover Crack's "atheist anthem" but I was happy to reprise my interest in less edgy and more inclusive bands like Operation Ivy or Built to Spill. If the lyrics were inoffensive, why not? Sayyid al-Sistani might forbid it outright but Sayyid Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah[63] (1935-2010) condoned music that did not lead to sexualized dance between men and women. On the matter of gender mixing, I also was willing to make concessions. So long as I kept my distance and avoided flirty conversations with the girls, why should I object to going to the park to watch the Canada Day fireworks in a large group of classmates? I was happy with the balance I had struck between keeping to *sirata lmustaqim* and being a member of a wider community that included non-believers. The *waswâsah*, while not disappearing entirely, consequently decreased

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[63] Sayyid Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah was born in Najaf, Iraq. Lebanese by origin, his "father Sayyid 'Abdul Rauf Fadlallah was a renowned *mujtahid* (religious scholar) at the Hawza (religious seminary), while his mother came from a prominent Shi'i family from South Lebanon (the Bazzi family)" (Baroudi 2013, 108). As he pursued a religious education Fadlallah acquainted himself also with "non-Islamic trends of thought (mainly Arab nationalist and Marxian) and…the works of prominent Arab literary figures, such as poets Ilyas Abu Shabaka and Badr Shaker al-Sayyab, and the renowned novelist and literary critic Taha Hussein" (Ibid). A precocious scholar, by the age of twenty-five Fadlallah had published the major treatise *uslub al-da'wa fi al-qur'an* (the Method or Style of Invitation in the Quran). In it he analyzes verses of the Quran which exhort would-be messengers of Islam to use only gentle dialogue and logic, as a response to "Orientalist claims that Islam condones violence and has spread through violence (Ibid). In 1966 he relocated permanently to Lebanon where he fashioned a unique "brand of political Islam—which he labelled dynamic Islam (*al-Islam al-haraki*)—[that] was well-suited to the recently urbanized, dynamic and disenchanted Shi'a of Lebanon" (Ibid, 109). In 1978 he established the *jami'yat al-mabarrat al-khayriyya* (Benevolent Charity Society) which included a wide array of health and social services available to Lebanese of all backgrounds (Ibid). During his time, Fadlallah was among the most respected and well-liked Shia leaders in Lebanon and was eulogized following his death in 2010 by political adversaries as well as recipients of his beneficence. He appears to be the *marja'* (source of emulation) of choice among progressive elements of the Dahieh.

in frequency. And whenever they did arise, I was able to manage my reaction to them much more effectively than before. Mrs. Burke was right.

The problem that remained, as was often the case during this period, was my parents. Evidently, they did not believe in striking a balance between their devotion and the wider community. Or, at least, they did not trust my ability to strike one. As my social circle expanded beyond the MSA, they again began to treat me and my outings with great suspicion. They watched over my shoulder while I was on the computer, lingered in the parking lots of places they dropped me off and, I could tell, periodically searched my room for contraband. I tried explaining to them that I had established boundaries; that my friends were respectful of them and that there was nothing to fear. But they insisted. "You cannot foresee how their influence on you will develop, where it will take you." Then one day my mother happened upon Zakaria and his girlfriend Trish waiting at a bus stop downtown, embracing one another and kissing. Without so much as an explanation why (I only learned of what she had seen years later), I was summarily forbidden from socializing with him. This hurt me deeply. It was one thing to ask that I keep on *sirata lmustaqim,* fulfil my obligations as a *mukalaf,* and do my part to help preserve our cultural identity. But to forbid me from seeing my oldest and dearest friend, a paragon of acceptance and support? And apparently for no reason other than his not being Muslim? That was another thing entirely—prejudice, plain and simple. While my parents were prepared to benefit from multiculturalism as a citizenship framework that granted equal rights to groups of diverse origins (Kymlicka 1995), they seemed entirely resistant to the idea of multiculturalism as a commitment to "learning about other cultures and possibly adopting their ways and practices" (Abdelhady 2011, 26). I wondered, was it really the *waswâsah* that made the practice of my faith so difficult or was it some aspect of the *hala* itself? Some deep-seated parochialism? Is this what the

waswâsah had been trying to point out to me all along? Unsurprisingly, I was told that I would be spending the summer in Lebanon.

July War

Being forbidden to see Zakaria led me to adopt, for the first time, a hypothetical attitude toward the *hala*, the type of attitude with which one pierces "the normative context of [their] lifeworld" (Habermas 1990, 126). Although I had strayed off *sirata lmustaqim* before, this time I was not motivated by a desire to fit in or have fun but rather to "distinguish soberly between socially accepted norms and valid norms, between de facto recognition of norms and norms that are *worthy* of recognition" (Ibid). Simply put, when I went to Lebanon in the summer of 2006, aged sixteen, my allegiance to the *hala* hung in the balance.

I took a chartered van to Pearson International Airport with my father on July 9. In sixteen hours, we were meant to meet my mother, who had left several weeks earlier, at Rafiq Hariri via Heathrow. Following a lengthy delay, however, our overnight flight to England was postponed until the morning. Once we arrived in London, the attendant at the Middle East Airlines counter explained that the quickest way to Beirut was now via Abu Dhabi. A further eight hours of layover and two more flights totaling ten hours had us arriving at Rafiq Hariri a day later than scheduled. My father, anxious to see his family for the first time in over four years, rented a car and drove us to the Biqa' after only one night in Haret Hreik. We left early, stopping once to pick up baklava from a Sea Sweet east of Zahle (the capital and largest city in the valley). All of my father's relatives were gathered to receive us in his parents' living room, including his siblings, cousins and surviving aunts and uncles. We had spinach and minced meat *sfiha* from the bakery for lunch. As we ate, we heard a great commotion outside: Hizballah had

conducted a cross-border raid, successfully taking members of the IDF hostage. Villagers were celebrating.

Noticing my confused expression, my father explained. “This is good news! The hostages can be exchanged for prisoners from our side.” I conveyed concern over an escalation of the conflict, but he told me not to worry. “This is politics as usual.” To be sure, it came as a great surprise to everyone when early the next morning the Israeli Airforce bombarded Hizballah’s munitions stockpiles and much else in both the Dahieh and Southern Province.[64] I woke up on July 13 to a gentle prod from my mother. I could hear her brother’s voice coming from the living room. “Why is *khalo* here? I thought he wasn’t coming up until next week?” She told me that the airport had been attacked; as of now we were stranded in Lebanon. We spent the next days—both sides of the family—in front of the television, being addressed by Lebanon’s *zouma* and working our way through carton after carton of Marlboro red and kilo after kilo of sunflower seeds. Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, then head of the Sunni Future Movement Party, promised to bring an end to the bombardments and disarm Hizballah. In a subsequent address directed toward foreign diplomats, Siniora cried while describing the extent of the damage left by the Israeli raids (Hage 2009, 730). I remember how viciously members of my family mocked him afterward, how perfectly his display of emotion played into their discourse, structured as it is “by the opposition between passivity and activity in the face of Israel. Crying was perceived as a result of the prime minister’s inability to act, and thus represented a historical powerlessness of the Lebanese government” (Ibid). In stark contrast to Siniora’s teary pleas, Hassan Nasrallah’s speeches were defiant. In all black robes and turban, the svelte Sayyid made it clear that

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[64] We learned later on that Israel, along with various members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, had been waiting for an invitation to engage Hizballah in total war (Hage 2009, 70).

Hizballah would not be forced into disarmament, neither by Israeli missiles nor the internal pressure they were designed to provoke. Showing an unwillingness to blink first, he threatened Haifa with long-range missiles.

My earliest memory of Sayyid Nasrallah comes from Hizballah's liberation of the Southern Province in 2000. From that point on he was an ever-present in our home, on the television, walls and tip of my father's tongue. Evoked in only the most hallowed tones the Sayyid is regarded as a shrewd politician, tactical genius, religious scholar and champion of the downtrodden. As a child I thought of him like Superman, an otherworldly force for good. I thought of him as someone who could prevent any harm from visiting my family. Someone I could pin my hopes on. But now, under my unmercifully hypothetical gaze, what appeared was a demagogue propped up by a legion of gun-toting loyalists, an unelected strongman delivering diatribes to mobs of the great unwashed writhing beneath that garish yellow flag with the green AK-47. I began to interpret the way my relatives accepted without question his version of events as their engagement in a cult of personality, "an established system of veneration of a political leader to which members of the [*hala*] are expected to subscribe, a system that is omnipresent and ubiquitous and one that is expected to persist indefinitely" (Rees 2004, 4). Rather than participate in their empty parroting of his remarks I scoured the internet—whenever we had electricity that is, a commodity that in Lebanon is always in short supply—for alternative interpretations of events that collectively came to be known as *harb tamuz* (July War).

"Why can't Hizballah disarm as all the other parties have since the Civil War? What gives Sayyid Nasrallah the right to take unilateral action against Israel? Long-term, don't these actions threaten to isolate Lebanon from the international community?" The uniformity and emotional nature of family members' responses to my questions communicated to me that any

limit to my identification with Hizballah was as good as a limit to our bond. "Hizballah's arms are the only thing standing between Lebanon and the normalization of ties with Israel.[65] Everyone who asks for disarmament implicates themselves in a Zionist scheme for domination of the region. The Lebanese government seeks the ruin of our people." It was hard to see my family in this light, as victims of a cult. But how else could I make sense of the little room in their discourse for moderation or debate, for anything other than the whole sale acceptance of Hizballah and its narrative?

When I learned that the government of Canada was sending ships from Cyprus to repatriate citizens, I begged my parents to find us a way to the port of Beirut. But they told me to relax, that things would return to normal soon. As the conflict dragged on, though, the bombardments drew closer to the Biqa' and a generalized panic spread. Soon my mother also began agitating for our departure. Having missed the ships sent from Cyprus, my father was compelled to hire a chauffeur to drive us to Damascus. There was dissent among the relatives. Some pointed out that the Beirut-Damascus highway was unsafe. Others, like my maternal uncle's wife, challenged us: "Why should you get to leave?" She was right. Why should we? It was totally unfair, but at that moment I really did not care. I wanted to get as far away as possible from the cult of Hizballah. The man hired to deliver us to the border with Syria had a leathery

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[65] On 1 September 1967, in the wake of the third Arab-Israeli war, the heads of Arab states led by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser agreed to the Khartoum Resolution, which famously contains the Three Nos: No peace with Israel, No recognition of Israel and No negotiations with Israel (see Mahler 2018, 172-3). To a certain extent it can be argued that today in the Middle East there are two kinds of states, those who continue to abide or at least pay lip-service to the Khartoum Resolution and those that have abrogated it. Among the former group, ever-shrinking, Syria and Lebanon appear to be the staunchest adherents. Indeed, a significant element of the *hala*'s narrative is steadfastness in this regard, a resolute support of the Palestinian cause, and a casting of the opponents of Hizballah as soft-bellied traitors who would turn their back on the quintessential Arab and Muslim cause for the reassurance of a détente with Israel. Opponents of Hizballah in Lebanon and beyond criticize their insistence on the Palestinian cause as disingenuous, a reason for maintaining the legitimacy of their status as the only Lebanese political party to have retained (and indeed grown) its arms following the Taif agreement. All this to say that perhaps there is no issue in Lebanon as divisive today as the status of Hizballah's arms, intimately related as it is to the matter of normalizing ties with Israel.

tan, wispy white hair and ill-fitting dentures. The buttons of his shirt were fastened in the wrong spots and he wore plastic thong slippers. Despite his failure to inspire confidence, our chauffeur delivered us to the border without incident. On the other side we found a room to rent near the Sayyidah Zaynab Mosque and Shrine outside Damascus where we stayed a few days while trying to book a flight back to Canada.[66] Upon returning to London, I was no longer on the fence—my experience of the July War confirmed for me that the *hala* suffered from insularity and provincialism, from a "fear of the Other and the conservative desire to remain within sameness" (Bouisson 2017, 439), and that this was due to the reactionary influence of Hizballah.

Out of Place

At this point in my development, I began to understand my parents' concern over my integration into Canadian society, my becoming multicultural, as an outcome of their manipulation by Hizballah. Consequently, I began looking to replace *sirata lmustaqim* with "a new normative structure that [was] solid enough to withstand critical inspection" (Habermas 1990, 126), one which exceeded the control and prejudice of Hassan Nasrallah. I vaguely recognized multiculturalism as being more responsive to the exigencies of the modern world (Davies 2008, 28), such as the globalization attested to by my experience of migration. But I only really began to appreciate its normative structure in Mrs. Mills' grade eleven English class. It was there I acquired a sense of what Charles Taylor (1975, 461) has, in his adaptation of Hegel, termed a "post-industrial *Sittlichkeit*," an ethical community of equal and mutual recognition between a multiplicity of nations within a single state (see Day 2000, 3, 177, 209).

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[66] The mosque is said to contain the grave of Zaynab, the daughter of Ali ibn Abi Talib and Fatimah. Zaynab was the granddaughter of the Prophet (PBUH).

Mrs. Mills was an extraordinary teacher: brilliant, caring and willing to challenge her students. She had taught all over the world—in Asia, Turkey, sub-Saharan Africa and even Papua New Guinea—could speak a half-dozen languages and wore a different coloured pair of Chuck Taylors to class every day. Equally worldly and variegated was her curriculum. While the section of grade eleven English taught by Mr. Dietrich read Thomas Hardy or J.D. Salinger, in Mrs. Mills' class we read Anita Rau Badami, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Edward Said. It was the work of the latter that had the greatest impression on me, specifically his memoir *Out of Place* (1999). As trite as it would be to say that, as I read it, I felt as though he were addressing me specifically, it is true. Excerpts like "the basic split in my life was the one between Arabic, my native language, and English the language of my education and subsequent expression" hit me like tidal waves of emotion: grief, relief, hope and awe (Ibid, 14). However, what most resonated with me was the overall message of the memoir: exile is a "forced journey leading to the full meaning of the self" (Al-Saleh 2011, 86). An unintended consequence of the age of migration and the refugee has been the "redemption of human essence as separated from geographic limitations" (Ibid, 90-1). I was captured by Said's (1994, xiii) idea of people, redeemed from the limitations of their geography, from the confines of their particular culture, being free to refine and elevate themselves by taking from "each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought." As Mrs. Mills explained to the class, Said's (Ibid, 32) injunction "to think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant" was not merely an invitation to sample and compare the music and cuisines of faraway cultures but rather a challenge to oppose demagogy and segregation in all its forms.

If *sirata lmustaqim* previously entailed me preserving my Shia Lebanese cultural identity, remaining on the straight and narrow now implied achieving independence by working through

my attachments to essentialist narratives (Said 1994, 336). For that is what the *hala* then appeared to be, an essence concocted by Hizballah, a gang of "native manipulators" who, in the "embattled imperial context out of which they came and in which they [are] felt to be necessary," deploy their rhetoric "to cover up contemporary faults, corruptions [and] tyrannies" (Ibid, 16). As illustrated by my latest experience in Lebanon, the "politics of confrontation and hostility" Hizballah trafficked in was liable to trigger devastating wars (Ibid, 17). In addition, it promoted defensive assertions of "minor ethnic" particularity, an "appalling tribalism" that fractures Lebanese society, separates its people and promotes greed (Ibid, 20). To be sure, nowhere is the emancipatory potential of a commitment to thinking through and interpreting together experiences that are ostensibly discrepant more obvious than in Lebanon, where divisions between its groups and fear of the Other are incessantly preyed upon by *zouma* looking to justify an immensely profitable system of clientelism (see for example Salloulh 2019 and Leenders 2012). Were each group to de-emphasize the particularity of their struggles with, for example, a lack of employment opportunities, access to potable water and reliable electricity, and instead recognize them as shared conditions, then they could combine their efforts to address them. Instead, each one blames the dysfunctional distribution of goods and services in Lebanon on the *zouma* of the others while fiercely defending their own from criticism. To that extent, the oppression of Lebanon's groups seemed to me like a consequence of the corruption and authoritarianism of their leaders as well as "the 'backwardness' *(takhalluf)* and 'ignorance' *(jahl)* of their own societies" (Sheehi 2004, 3).[67] I interpreted these as an outcome of their lack of appreciation for "the universal spectrum of historical, social, and cultural progress" (Ibid, 135).

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[67] With his book, the *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (2004), Stephen Sheehi offers an immense analysis of al-Nahda or the "awakening," spurred on by Napoleon's voyage to Egypt in 1778, of Arab intellectuals in the 19th century to Western forms of thinking and the intellectual struggle ensuing from their internalization of them. Like

The detrimental effect of the cultural compartmentalization encouraged by the *hala* was evident in Canada as well. Although unlikely to spill out into bloody conflict, how much of the tension between London's majoritarian groups and its Muslims could be blamed on the unbending nativism of people like my parents? By that point they had been in Canada for over thirteen years and yet they could only speak enough English to get through transactions with customers at the bakery. Not a single majoritarian Canadian could be counted among their friends. Surely their unwillingness to consort, let alone form meaningful relationships, with locals gave credence to the media narratives that emerged following the July War. Narratives that, implicitly or explicitly, painted a picture of Lebanese as "Canadians of convenience," leeches whose citizenship was "purely instrumental" and "defined in terms of the value and ease of travel afforded by a highly respected passport…[an] 'insurance policy'" (Stasiulis and Amery 2010, 87). If only they would just reach across the aisle and prove otherwise. But I could not be sure that they were even aware of these narratives, as they showed no interest in local affairs of any sort. They gathered all their news from satellite television, Lebanese channels like LBCI, OTV, MTV and Al Manar.[68] Indeed, the enduring image I have of my parents from that time is them lying on couches perpendicular to the TV, my father smoking shisha and my mother reading from the Quran as Al-Manar, Hizballah's news channel, played in the background. Just completely isolated from the rest of the world. What's more, they reacted with infuriating incredulity to my developing interest in cosmopolitan concerns.

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the figures in Sheehi's monograph, stalwarts of Arabic literature such as Butrus al-Bustani, Jurji Zaydan and Nasif al-Yaziji, I too have struggled with the urge to self-deprecate. Not until the following inscape, however, did I come to understand my contact with Western forms of thinking in these terms.

[68] In Lebanon there is a news agency for every political persuasion, owned and operated by the *zouma*. This has led to a widespread discourse of "alternative facts" presaging the "post-truth" era of contemporary American news media (see for example Dalkir and Katz 2020).

Mrs. Mills once brought a man to class named Mark Konrad, the executive director of Global Importune, a non-profit human rights organization based in London. He gave us a presentation on his letter writing campaigns and how, with the help of volunteers, his petitioning had led to the release of hundreds of Amnesty International political prisoners (Konrad n.d.). Afterwards I signed up to his mailing list and began to receive pre-written statements in the mail that I would add my signature to before mailing to the relevant consulate. "If you want to write letters write them on behalf of the *muqawameen* (resistance fighters) held by the Israelis," my mother would say. Or when I would donate money to an organization like Save the Children she would say, "Why not send this money to the *shahid* foundation (a Hizballah-run charity for the orphans of martyrs)?" Her dismissiveness of my efforts infuriated me; "is the *muqawama* the only thing you care or think about?" The assuredness with which she would respond in the affirmative rung like an indictment of her and my father's narrow-mindedness, their *takhalluf* and *jahl*.

Having confided my feelings to Mrs. Mills, she began encouraging me to consider moving away for university, to her *alma mater* the University of Toronto. "Oh, you would love it in Toronto, such a vibrant and multicultural city. I think it would do you a world of good to get out of London." I thought so too. I became fixated on the idea, on the freedom and happiness that awaited me there. When I brought up the idea to my parents, they predictably rejected it. "You will go to UWO here in London," my father said matter-of-factly. But I was defiant. "No, actually, I won't. I don't need your approval. I can qualify for OSAP all on my own. I'll get the rest of the money I need from bursaries." My mother fumed, "What's your big idea? To go there and do all the things we have forbidden you from doing here? To have a girlfriend, drink and live in filth?" At another time I might have been offended by the insinuation that, as opposed to their

brutalizing conservatism, I was being driven away by my givenness to base instincts. But I refused to engage because, I realized, I really did not have to. As far as I was concerned, I was already as good as gone. I simply shrugged and turned my back on the conversation. "So, you will turn your back on Allah as well?" asked my father. "I don't believe in God," I said over my shoulder before continuing down the stairs to my room in the basement. My heart pounded. It was the first time I had vocalized my bourgeoning disbelief. There was no taking it back, my relationship with my parents would be permanently altered for it.

The remaining twelve months of life in London were icy. My parents and I spoke very little as I awaited my acceptance letter from UofT, enrolled in its University College and packed up my room. Eventually though, the moment arrived when I needed to ask my father for a ride to Toronto. The way he said "of course *baba*" caught me off guard, as if, all this time, he had been waiting for me to do so; a thought that saddened me. I felt worse still when on the morning of the move my mother asked if she was welcome to come along. Once there, she stood in the corner of my dorm room, quietly sobbing as my father and I unloaded my effects. That their displays of emotion surprised me as they did spoke to the extent that I had made adversaries of them, to my taking for granted that they did not love me.

Denouement

Detachment is the inscape from which the problem posed to me by assimilation—the antagonism between the *hala*, the sphere of home/family, and majoritarian Canada, the sphere of school/society—emerged as a culture clash. A clash between an irrationally conservative culture on the one hand and an enlightened multi-culture on the other. Given the harsh nature of this emerging contrast, Detachment is also the phase in which I abandoned the effort to preserve a traditional Shia Lebanese cultural identity and began adapting to the normative framework of

multiculturalism. This development certainly fits with the findings of existing research. For example, when declaring a preference for majoritarian Canadian peers, one high-school aged participant in S. and B. Abu-Laban's (1999, 121) study explains, "My own people aren't quite developed yet. It's hard to deal with them…They can't accept the fact that I am a liberal." The authors suggest that this is a response to "Arab culture" and its emphasis on conformity and hierarchical relationships. The high schoolers Tastsoglou and Petrinioti (2011, 180) interviewed also attributed the antagonism between their private and public lives to "backward" aspects of Lebanese culture, its chauvinism, gender inequality and gossiping. And while Abdelhady (2011, 187) interviewed adults exclusively, her respondents ascribed the desire to retain rigid identification with ethno-religious practices and ideas as a product of the "parochial upbringing" of some members of the first-generation. With those exceptions noted, Abdelhady (Ibid, 93) found that the Lebanese diaspora otherwise preferred "engag[ing] in 'postethnic' communities that transcend traditional ethnic attachments."

Of course, as Tastsoglou and Petrinioti (2011, 181) explain, the choice between a "Lebanese" cultural identity and a Canadian one need not be conceived as a "zero-sum" game. The centrality of multiculturalism to Canadian identity allows it to "comfortably include a variety of ethnic identifications." Unlike the participants in their study, however, I found the differences between the culture of my home/family and the culture of my school/society to be irreconcilable. I tried to combine preservation of the former with participation in the latter. But my parents made it perfectly clear that this was not a viable option for me. I believe the reason for this discrepancy is the Christian bias of Tastsoglou and Petrinioti's (Ibid, 177) sample. As Hayani (1999, 295-6) notes across a number of variables in his own survey, including ethnic and national identification as well as preference for endogamous marriages, Christians find it easier

to “acculturate.” Historically, Lebanese Maronites have looked Westward, known by themselves and others as a bastion of secularism and modernism in the Middle East (Abdelhady 2011, 29).[69] Al-Fartousi’s (2016, 195) study, focused as it is on the particular experience of Twelver Shia youth, recognizes the either/or nature of the choice between the cultural identity of the *hala* and that of majoritarian Canada. However, unlike me, many of Al-Fartousi’s respondents, at a similar point in their development, chose to preserve their Shia Lebanese cultural identity, relying on the *hala*’s discourse of resistance to do so. I only acquired an appreciation for this discourse and its possible application to the Canadian context at a subsequent point in my development.

Inscape III: Freedom

“The atavistic sentiment is a supreme sign of authenticity and rootedness. Should the thread that links us to this atavism be broken, we would wallow in the mire of anonymity and automatism. We would align ourselves like electronic apes with the alien ways of living and thinking that exert their magnetic pull on us...These facts might seem antagonistic both to the Westerner who is generously preaching equality and universality and the Third World intellectual who aspires, following the lead of internationalist ideologies, to the equality and universalism that he considers to be a salutary gain and an acquisition of existential dignity. We are no longer duped by such aspirations.”

(Abellatif Laâbi 2016, 98)

Watching my parents drive off after helping me unpack that first night in Sir Dan’s residence filled me with ambivalence. Only eighteen, I was about to go the longest I ever had without seeing them. As worried as I was about being left to my own devices, though, I was equally excited by the prospect of living on a campus as diverse as UofT’s gothic revivalist St. George, of belonging to a community of people who, like me, knew what it meant to “navigate two or more social worlds” (Abdelhady 2011, 176). Over 10% of the undergraduate population came from outside of Canada, with the majority of those arriving from China, South Korea,

[69] For an overview of the Maronite community’s connections with Western powers from the age of crusader kingdoms to the French mandate and Cold War, see McCallum (2010).

India, Pakistan, Japan, Malaysia and Nigeria (UofT Enrollment Report 2008/9). In my house, McCaul, there were students from South Africa, Guyana, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Jordan, Turkey and the Netherlands. In addition to the northwestern most segment of Sir Dan's we shared a common room, a kitchen and two co-ed washrooms, one on each floor. Given the diversity of our backgrounds, the relationships we formed were premised on shared lifestyles, dispositions and cosmopolitan concerns rather than national or ethnic identifications. To that end, the university was proving to be just the "utopian space" Said (1994, xxvi) promised it would be.

Diasporic Consciousness

My closest friend during this time was Danni Chu, a fellow one-and-a-half generation immigrant who arrived from Hong Kong in time for grade school. We bonded over our struggles in PHL100, the introductory philosophy course centred around a series of foundational concerns like: What is the good life? Does God exist? What is the nature of consciousness? In searching for answers to these questions, we surveyed the views of a number of the Western canon's stalwarts including Socrates, Plato, Descartes, Hegel, Nietzsche and Sartre. Danni and I trudged through the readings together between the stacks at Gerstein Library. As frustrating as they often were, written in turgid and obfuscatory language, we took supreme pleasure in deciphering their meanings. The views I most enjoyed, insofar as they most validated the outlook on life I had adopted vis-à-vis Said, belonged to Sartre. Of greatest comfort were his views on the nature of consciousness and the existence of God, two seemingly unrelated issues that he tied together in fascinating fashion.

Simply put, Sartre's *prima philosophia* in *Being and Nothingness* (1984) is premised on a radical distinction between consciousness, what he calls *etre-pour-soi* or being-for-itself (the For-itself), and literally everything else in the world, what he calls *etre-en-soi* or being-in-itself

(the In-itself).[70] In other words, for Sartre consciousness is a singular phenomenon and peculiar capacity of human beings that is completely distinct from all other phenomena and objects (the givens of reality, including emotions and the ego) present in the world. The For-itself is "a lack of Being…[B]y bringing Nothingness into the world the For-itself can stand out from Being and judge other beings by knowing what it is not" (Ibid, 800). Said in yet a different way, the For-itself, the being of consciousness, is nothing but the consciousness of being. The In-itself, in turn, is the remainder of non-conscious Being—it is "a plenitude, and strictly speaking we can say of it only that it is" (Ibid).

Notably, Sartre attributes the non-being of the For-itself to its "diasporic" nature. Since the In-itself

> simply is what it is, it has only one way of being its being. But the moment that something is no longer its being, then various ways of being it while not being it arise simultaneously. The For-itself…must at the same time fulfill these three requirements: 1) to not-be what it is, 2) to be what it is not, 3) to be what it is not and to not-be what it is—within the unity of a perpetual referring. (Ibid, 196)

The For-itself is not what it is in the sense that it lacks a coincidence with any fixed nature or essence and is what it is not in the sense that it is a possible transcendence of all fixed natures and essences. It is also both, in the sense that it is a "dissolving force…at the center of a unifying act…[a] quasi-multiplicity, a foreshadowing of dissociation in the heart of [this] unity…a relation of being at the heart of this same being" (Ibid, 194). It is a series of transcendences: "before itself, behind itself: never itself" (Ibid, 201). The For-itself must have this "structure of selfness" Sartre describes as "diasporic" because, again, consciousness is a presence to the In-

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[70] The two terms most central to Sartre's thesis are adaptations of those made famous by Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977, see for example: 33, 38, 46, 302, 303).

itself—it is intentional (directional) or always a consciousness of something.[71] And yet, despite its translucence, "the Past is a necessary structure of the For-itself [because] the For-itself can exist only as a nihilating surpassing, and this surpassing implies something surpassed" (Ibid, 197). Moreover, it is "only because the [For-itself] in its being is there outside itself that…there can be in general any before and after" (Ibid, 195). Indeed, "the present For-itself to the For-itself *become* In-itself hides from us the primitive relation of Pastness, which is a relation between the For-itself and pure In-itself" (Ibid, 198). The pure-In-Itself is the state of the universe prior to consciousness, prior to the eruption of the For-itself, when there was simply the repose of a "total night of identity," an opaque and contourless Being (Ibid).[72] Consequently, the For-itself "feels a profound solidarity of being" with the pure In-itself, a coincidence with itself that cannot be reprised (Ibid).

In Sartre's discourse, then, the (pure) In-itself is to the For-itself what the homeland is to the diasporic intellectual in Said's. For this intellectual has "the independence and detachment of someone whose homeland is 'sweet,' but whose actual condition makes it impossible to recapture that sweetness" (Said 1994, 336). The diasporic intellectual feels about his homeland

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[71] In Sartre's (1987, 18) essay titled *The Transcendence of the Ego:* An *Existentialist Theory of Consciousness,* he offers his concept of a spontaneous For-itself as the answer to Husserl's aporia of a transcendental ego, which, for the former, "seems to do nothing less than reverse the initial claim of phenomenology to be able to investigate objects in their own right." For, if as Husserl claimed, an ego-endowed consciousness is also to be "an intentional consciousness, then the ego must make contact with some reality different from itself. Otherwise, of course, the ego is simply caught up in the circle of its own subjectivity…Clearly, an intermediary or third reality will be needed which will have to combine characteristics of both the ego and its objects…the notion of a hybrid stuff (termed *hyle* by Husserl) which is 'contained in' consciousness but is able to 'represent' or 'resemble' the objects intended by the ego" (19). Sartre, therefore, insists on consciousness being absolutely bereft of content in order to "avoid the irony of a 'phenomenology' that admits a transcendental ego standing behind the acts of consciousness…and must end by referring the character of every object to the activity of consciousness" (20).

[72] Sartre's ontology unearths a profound metaphysical contradiction, for nothing allows him "to affirm…that the nihilation of the in-itself in the for-itself has for its meaning—from the very start and at the very heart of the in-itself—the project of being its own self-cause…since it is through the For-itself that the possibility of a foundation comes to the world." And so, he limits himself to declaring that "everything takes place *as if* the In-itself in a project to found itself gave itself the modification of the For-itself" (789).

as the For-itself feels about the In-itself, as the peculiarly given density of the hurdle they overcame *en route* to consciousness, the "before" which gave way to and so forever colours the present and future. It is the experience of missing a homeland which gives the diasporic intellectual insight into the freedom human beings have to "make their own history…cultures and ethnic identities" (Ibid). Only then does one gain an appreciation for the universal register of human experience— "its written records in all their diversity and particularity; otherwise one would remain committed more to the exclusions and reactions of prejudice than to the negative freedom of real knowledge" (Ibid, 335-6). Determinations such as Indian, woman or Muslim, are belied—undoubtedly in Sartre's thought but, I am arguing here, seemingly in Said's as well—by the ontological status of freedom; the freedom of the For-itself is guaranteed by its being nothing but a presence-to-self, a presence to the In-itself, as the freedom of the diasporic intellectual is guaranteed by their being, as a conscious individual, nothing but a perspective on their current state (Thomas Flynn 2011).[73] However, as both Said (1994, 336) and Sartre (1984, 711) are quick to point out, the burden of the responsibility which accompanies knowledge of the extent and nature of their freedom, a responsibility that extends to the very appearance and meaning of the world insofar as these are assigned by consciousness, on occasion tempts the diasporic intellectual and For-itself to try and flee it.

Remarking on the case of influential French psychologist Pierre Janet (1859-1947) involving a young bride tormented by the thought of sitting at the window sill and "summoning…passers-by like a prostitute…when her husband left her alone…[despite] nothing

[73] In 1940 Sartre was captured by German soldiers in Poland, spending nine months as a prisoner of war. In these months, he wrote in an article for the *Atlantic*, his life blossomed. The "atrocious circumstances…made us at the same time live—without any deceit, nakedly…Exile, captivity, above all death, which one easily shies from during happier times, were then our perpetual worry, and we were to learn that they were not avoidable accidents...but…the deepest source of being" (1944, 39).

in her education, in her past, nor in her character…serv[ing] as an explanation of such a fear," Sartre (1987, 100) suggests that Janet's patient suffered from a "vertigo of possibility."[74] According to the philosopher, at the opportunity for doing something totally unexpected, the bride was overcome by a dizzying intuition of her spontaneity. For Sartre the threat of this "vertigo" was a permanent fixture of consciousness, usually counteracted by the projection of a stable identity afforded by the ego (Ibid). Indeed, so prominent is the desire to flee from knowledge of one's freedom that an entire psychic entity like the ego emerged solely to regulate it. [75] As Sartre famously said, the passion not to know freedom "is the reverse of that of Christ, for man [*sic*] loses himself in order that God may be born. But the idea of God is contradictory, and we lose ourselves in vain. Man [*sic*] is a useless passion" (Ibid, 784). In this formulation, God, the ego *par excellence*, is a contradictory admixture of two irreducible types of being, of being-for-itself and being-in-itself, transcendence and facticity or consciousness and essence.

As a first-year student at UofT, Sartre's ideas on consciousness made for an important supplement to the normative structure I had gleaned from Said's injunction to work through my

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[74] As esteemed interpreter Ronald E. Santoni (1995, xv) explains the notion of bad faith or, rather simplistically, "lying to oneself" is the pervasive interest of Sartre's philosophy, the idea that seems to have occupied him from the beginning to the end of his existential inquiry. If bad faith, concealing from oneself the extent of one's freedom, is an impulse to shield oneself from the uncertainty of existence then vertigo of possibility is the affliction of an insight which robs one, even if only momentarily, of the ability to do so.
[75] Sartre (1987, 53) explains "the complex structure of consciousness…as follows: there is an unreflected act of reflection, without an I, which is directed on a reflected consciousness. The latter becomes the object of the reflecting consciousness without ceasing to affirm its own object. At the same time, a new object appears which is the occasion for an affirmation by reflective consciousness, and which is consequently not on the same level as the unreflected consciousness, nor on the same level as the object of the reflected consciousness. This transcendent object of the reflective act is the I." To the extent that it is only available to reflective consciousness, the ego is nothing more than "creation *ex nihilo*" (Ibid, 77). Or the "questionable character of my ego…does not signify that I have a true me which I am unaware of, but only that the intended ego has in itself the character of dubitability (in certain cases, the character of falsehood). The metaphysical hypothesis according to which my ego would not be composed of elements having existed in reality (ten years ago or a second ago), but would only be constituted of false memories, is not excluded, the power of the *malin genie* extends so far" (Ibid, 76). The ego, in the final analysis, appears in Sartre's philosophy as nothing more than a (tall) tale woven from the series of emotional states and actions that really make up one's existence, an *ex nihilo* sense of consistency conferred upon them.

attachments to the *hala*. If I had previously sensed that this injunction entailed the passage from self-deception to authenticity, I found proof in Sartre's pithy formulation "nothing is in consciousness which is not consciousness of being" (Ibid, 638). After Sartre, freedom from what Said (1994, 32) called "essences" became an ontological given. Furthermore, the French philosopher gave important context to the importance Said ascribed to "the hauntingly beautiful passage by Hugo of St. Victor, a twelfth century monk from Saxony," in which it is written that the "person who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign place" (in Said 1994, 335). Ultimately, in order to create a world that is more just, its variegated peoples must realize that they are an integrated whole and in order to do that they must accept the knowledge of freedom. It is entirely up to them whether or not they see themselves as belonging to a whole. Most importantly, though, by expanding the register of the antagonism between the *hala* and majoritarian Canada to include ideals of consciousness, my introduction to Sartre's thought helped me better appreciate why my parents and the other first-generation members of the *hala* in White Oaks are nevertheless so willing and eager to remain within sameness. They rejected the possibilities of a commitment to thinking through and interpreting together discrepant cultures—for example, an end to Hizballah's manipulation of them, a more enriching form of Canadian citizenship and a less adversarial relationship with their relatively acculturated children—because too much had been made out of the immutability of the Shia Lebanese experience, too much of the world, its appearance and their identity had come to rest on their objectification of this experience. Hence why my innocent interest in the world beyond the *hala* had been construed by my parents as so "utterly problematic," why my "mixing" to any extent with majoritarian Canadian was "felt as an assault and defeat" (Buisson 2017, 430).

Remarking on this, I remembered how at about eight or nine years old my parents bought me a series of coarsely translated pamphlets on the lives of the Twelve Imams. With the exception of the occulted Mahdi, the yellow tinged pages of the pamphlets depicted each of their lives as having been pockmarked by imprisonments, assassination attempts and ultimately ruin at the feet of either an Umayyad or Abbasid Caliph. When I asked my mother why the Imams had been the targets of such persecution she explained, "Because as long as a descendent of the Prophet walked the earth the power and authority of the corrupt Caliphs would be in question." Why Hizballah is so well received by people like my parents, I then realized, is because of the role they play in preventing the meaning and purpose that has been assigned to the Shia people's 1400-year long history of persecution—all the martyrs, the partisan defeats and victories—from simply evaporating into an ether of relativity. They prevent what would be an especially disorienting experience of vertigo. It also then made sense why in London, Ontario the Party of God might mean more to my parents than had they stayed in Lebanon, why their reminders of *sirata lmustaqim* were so much more anxiety fuelled then those I had received from my aunts and uncles, because the threat of vertigo is much more pronounced in a multicultural society. Hizballah, I thought, is to my parents what that pane of glass must have seemed to Janet's young bride, a final rampart between them and the dissolution of their reality.

To that end exposure to Sartre's concept of consciousness made me more sympathetic to my parents' desire to remain within sameness. Afterall, I myself had experienced how disorienting a vertigo of possibility can be, the phenomenon I now recognized my *waswâsah* as being a manifestation of. But my sympathy only stretched so far, like the sympathy a great thinker might reserve for a humankind that is "even lazier than they are timid, [and] fear[ing] most of all the inconveniences with which unconditional honesty and nakedness would burden

them" (Nietzsche 1997, 128). For if I managed to find the courage to accept the knowledge of freedom there was no good reason for them not to do the same. In any case, whatever comfort in stability Hizballah offered them ultimately only worked against their cause since, again, the redemption of all peoples, including Shia Lebanese, hinges on their realization that "mankind form[s] a marvelous, almost symphonic whole whose progress and formations, again as a whole, c[an] be studied exclusively as a concerted and secular historical experience, not as an exemplification of the divine" (Said 1994, 44).[76] This I believed above all else.

Working through Sartre with Danni set the stage for my undergraduate experience. In addition to reinforcing my faith in the utopian potential of the university, a space where people of diverse origins congregate to refine and elevate themselves, it set the standard for collegiality as well. Indeed, our interaction came to represent an ideal of mutual understanding built on philosophy. Together we made our way through the course offerings at UofT, through ancient, early and late medieval philosophy, the systems of Kant and Hegel, phenomenology, metaphysics and more. As the embryo recapitulates in abbreviated form the stages of organic evolution, Danni and I charted a path for recapitulating in condensed form "the *Bildung* of the human spirit," the progress of the symphonic whole (Kaufman 1965, 45).[77] Our efforts

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[76] Said's ideal of culture, an overcoming of humanity's contradictions through the conscious solidarity of the whole, makes obvious overtures to the philosophy of Hegel. Interestingly, I know of few analyses which pay much mind to this connection. Nowhere else is it as conspicuous as it is in this statement, one which might as well be lifted from a discussion of *Bildung*, a most characteristically Hegelian concept discussed below.
[77] Loosely, *Bildung* is a term from the philosophy of Hegel that can be defined as cultivation. For a more judicious definition I offer Bykova's (2020, 426): "For Hegel, the term refers to the formative self-development of individual and universal spiritual entities: human individuals and the human race construed as world spirit. This self-development occurs through the own self-directed activity of a spiritual being, which is simultaneously the activity of self-discovery and of self-realization. Hegel portrays *Bildung* as an on-going dialectical (contradiction-ridden) process, a series of achievements that contribute to the individual's self-making. Yet this process of self-formation is not a purely individual undertaking; it is a social enterprise that takes place in the historical and social world (the world of spirit) through various interactions with other individuals. Only through this dialectical dynamic does the spiritual being come to self-realization, which is manifest in freedom from dependence upon nature and eventually from everything that is given as pre-determined. It is this complex process of the formation of the universal subjects

contrasted sharply with what I saw of my parents whenever I returned to London to visit, still perpendicular to the TV in the living room, reading, watching and listening to Hizballah controlled media. Too exhausted to really care, I pitied them for all they were missing out on, for their inability to see the forest from the trees, "some sort of whole instead of the defensive little patch offered by [their] own culture, literature and history" (Said 1994, 43).

BLM/SJW

UofT was the first place I ever encountered wealth. My classmates were the sons and daughters of established professionals, renowned physicians and business magnates. Naively, this had given me a sense of security, as if my boat would be lifted by their rising tide. And indeed, promises were made. Promises that, when the time came, were for a variety of reasons and excuses not kept. As one of the few who lacked access to gilded networks of opportunity, the prospect of convocation brought with it an element of dread. Already over $30,000 in debt to OSAP, the idea of attending law school, as Danni would go on to do, was fiscally frightening. In any case I had no interest in being a Bay St. lawyer. I would have liked to advance to graduate studies but, as many a UofT undergrad will tell you, the grading curve, at St. George especially, was prohibitive in that regard. And so, I entered a post-recession job market in 2012, aged twenty-two, armed with nothing more than a paltry B.A. With my funding reserves drying up and no real chance at gainful employment, I was soon forced to accept the inevitable: it was time to return to London.

To say the least, I did not enjoy reprising my life at home, my being saddled once more with an essence. Having to again negotiate my comings and goings, lie about who I was seeing

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of thought, will and action historically and socially developed within cultural forms of the manifest (world) spirit that Hegel describes as the 'path of *Bildung*.'"

and what we were doing was terribly regressive. What's worse, my parents would periodically spring religious interventions on me, ranging from the subtle to the not-so-subtle. At one end of the spectrum my father might gift me a translated copy of a text like *nahj al-balagha* (Peak of Eloquence), a famous collection of sermons and letters attributed to Imam Ali.[78] At other times, when an Iraqi Imam was in town to deliver a sermon to the *hussainiyah*, my parents might invite him over afterwards under the auspices of dinner but really to "answer any questions I might have." And then, when all else failed, my mother was liable to burst into tears and say something like, "You will not pray? You will not fast? I did not raise you to be this way. Don't you see how much this pains us?" Desperate for any job that paid enough for me to rent an apartment, I became a full-time clerk at a gas-station near my old high school. The owner was a Napoleonic figure, in stature as well as temperament, as cruel to the workers as he was obsequious with customers. That winter was my darkest yet, cold in every regard. Nevertheless, the choice between the gas station and my parents' badgering was an easy one to make. I was soon able to rent a studio apartment in one of London's student ghettos near UWO, where I subsequently regained a sense of independence and freedom.

After work I would often go to unwind at the Grad Club, a student pub in the basement of Middlesex College. That's where I met Fergie, an associate professor in the Department of Political Science. A loud, ginger haired Texan and reluctant spousal hire, Fergie and I struck up a friendship over craft beer and American football. As the scope of our conversations grew and he

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[78] *nahj al-balagha* is not only "recited in devotional contexts, but it is also recognized as an example of the most eloquent Arabic. Commentaries on it (the most famous being that of Ibn Abi al-Hadid, d. 656/1258) include extensive discussions of its literary qualities, as well as examinations of its more theological (and at times explicitly 'political') content" (Gleave 2008). Two of its most famous entries include a sermon in which Imam Ali explicates his claim to the caliphate and a letter to the governor of Egypt in which he outlines an ideal of *sharia* not "as a means of social control but as a path to religious awakening and the spiritual wellbeing of the community" (Ibid).

learned of my situation Fergie offered me a position as a research assistant. He was coming up for review by the tenure board and needed help updating his dissertation before sending it out to a publisher. He could not offer me enough hours to leave the gas station altogether but enough to drop a day or two from my schedule. Before long Fergie was duly impressed by the care and dedication with which I attended to our business. And so, one day, he asked me if I would like to apply to the department's M.A. program. I explained to him that my transcripts were likely not of the standard required. He was reassuring: "Don't worry about that too much. Just apply. We'll see if we can't get you into the yes pile by the time it's all said and done." Political science did not appear to be the most interesting field of study—like Fergie's area of research, it was quite narrow in focus and naively positivist—but it presented me with a lifeline I could not rightly reject. Plus, there was a handful of professors in the department who incorporated elements of continental philosophy into their work and Fergie promised to supervise any project I wanted to undertake.

The summer leading up to my entrance to the program is when George Zimmerman was acquitted by a Florida judge in the shooting death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin (Alvarez, Lizette and Cara Buckley. "Zimmerman is Acquitted in Trayvon Martin Killing." *New York Times*, July 13, 2013). The outcry over the acquittal was ubiquitous online, where the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter first appeared and dominated social media platforms for months (Whiteout 2018, 63). Even still, the event's historical significance was as yet unclear and, indeed, continues to unfold today. One thing was immediately clear though: the campus zeitgeist had been altered for good. A new figure proliferated in the halls and classrooms of the university, the social justice warrior (SJW) (see Phelan 2019 and Massanari and Chess 2018). More than anything else, the figure of the SJW is indicative of the contemporary discourse of social justice. Once

centered on claims for redistribution from the North to the South, from the rich to the poor and from employers to employees, the discourse was now firmly centered around identity politics or claims for "the recognition of distinctive perspectives among ethnic, racial and sexual minorities" (Fraser 1999, 25).[79] On a campus as overwhelmingly white as UWO, colloquially known as a "safety school" for the underachieving children of country club Torontonians, the SJWs were frequently derided as call-out trolls, performative activists and humorless shrills. This derision largely occurred through the sharing of memes pulled from sites like 4chan and Reddit, where SJWs are depicted with sexist and misogynist tropes (Massanari and Chess 2018, 529; see also Ekman 2014).

The popularity of these memes irked me from the start, as it was evident that the SJW was becoming a rallying point for neoliberals, men's rights activists, Islamophobes and neo-Nazis alike. Indeed, in a recent study Phelan (2019, 458) convincingly demonstrates how the latent affiliations between these groups have gained coherence and potency through opposition to the SJW as a common antagonist, a coherence and potency we now recognize as the alt-right. Nevertheless, I found the identity politics of the SJW hard to swallow, as it appeared to be a progressive inversion of the fundamentalist identity politics practiced by the likes of my parents (Fraser 1999, 25). I was troubled for all the same reasons, because identity politics threatens to alienate and imprison people in the views and roles associated with their identity (Maldonado-Torres 2012, 79); promotes the compartmentalization of cultures; and ultimately engages in the stultifying politics of blame if not outright confrontation and hostility (Said 1994, 17-8). I shared with the SJW their concern with justice and equity but remained convinced that the only way to

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[79] To be clear I do not see these different approaches to social justice as antithetical. Indeed, the ideal approach, I believe, would combine the two.

realize a better world was to see beyond essentialist identities, to actualize the potential of the symphonic whole through appeals to emancipation and enlightenment (Ibid, 26). Not until I met Sawsan did I learn that I too was practicing a form of identity politics.

48ers

Having excelled during my year at UWO, I had sufficient reason to expect being accepted into a Ph.D. program. In light of my experience at the gas station, however, I did not wish to take anything for granted, and so I applied to over thirty programs across Canada and the U.S. In order to keep track of what supporting materials needed to be sent where and when, I bought and set up in my living room a white board roughly the size of a queen bed. Other than wanting to branch out from political science my only criterion was interdisciplinarity, such as one might enjoy in a "cultural studies," "theory and criticism" or "social and political thought" department. Soon the rejection notices began to pile up. Feeling discouraged, I took the opportunity one day to vent to a colleague at UWO. They asked me whether I had considered any Geography Departments. I was taken aback by the question. The last time I had been enrolled in a geography class was in the ninth grade, when Mr. Prouty struggled to stretch out the material over an entire semester. Our final exam involved drawing in the borders of provinces and labeling their capitals on a blank outline of the map of Canada. "Universities offer courses in geography?" I asked, prompting my colleague to laugh. "Yeah," they replied, "it's sort of a hodgepodge of anthropology, sociology and environmental studies." Their description piqued my interest. Some cursory research later that evening corroborated the notion of geography's unwieldiness. Not only is the discipline awkwardly divided into "physical" and "human" sections, I found, but the latter itself divided into sweeping subsections like "economic geography," "cultural geography" and "political geography." What most attracted me, though,

was its Enlightenment origins, its early contribution to the “great map of Mankind” (Withers 2007, 12),[80] something of which is preserved in an ethos of global interconnectedness. As soon as I committed to the idea of becoming a geographer, things began to fall in place. Late as it was into the 2014 admissions cycle the only program still accepting applications was out of the University of British Columbia (UBC) where, I was excited to find, one of its senior faculty members had written a book on Edward Said. A fortnight later I received an e-mail from the graduate coordinator informing me of my successful application, that my preferred faculty member had chosen me as a student. The serendipity of it all amounted to a feeling of “salvation by geography” (Tuan 2009, 115).

I decided to relocate to Vancouver early, about six or so weeks prior to the beginning of term, and moved into a studio apartment on E. Hastings St., just west of Nanaimo St. My first impressions of Vancouver centred around its relative lack of diversity, especially in comparison to Toronto, and its opioid crisis (see Strike and Watson 2019). The bus I took to campus transited through the intersection of W. Hastings St. and Main. St., a terribly sad scene of human suffering. Ever sadder for being in such proximity to the opulence of west Vancouver, the frivolity of the yoga-mat and Patagonia crowd. Vancouver, I quickly realized, was a city with a most off-putting “economic geography.” As for the UBC campus, its majesty is undeniable. Located at the edge of a peninsula its vista combines the Pacific Ocean with the Cascade Mountains. The Geography Department itself is located in a building at the southern lip of campus close to Wreck Beach. I spent much of that summer there, reading and skipping stones.

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[80] The Enlightenment, explains Withers (2020, 147), “was characterized by a widespread civic engagement with geography.” This included maps, globes and anthropological texts concerning the “geography of human difference” becoming part of the sociability of the European family home (Ibid, 145). If only ideally, this engagement helped to “free the mind from many foolish prejudices” (Ibid, 148).

UBC is also where I met Sawsan, tall and bronzed in a summery lilac jumpsuit, an international med-student from Nazareth.

While growing up in the *hala* the Palestinian cause (*al-qadiyyah al-filistiniyyah*) was very much a fixture of day-to-day life. The histories and fortunes of the Palestinian and Shia Lebanese peoples, my parents never tired of informing me, are intimately bound up in one another. And yet, before Sawsan and I started dating, I knew nothing of the plight of Palestinians outside of Lebanese refugee camps, Gaza and the West Bank, the plight of Palestinians living as citizens of Israel. At first, she was guarded in her responses to inquiries I made into her childhood and adolescence. I gathered that she and her family had moved to Jordan sometime after the Second Intifada (2000-2005), but she would not say wherefrom exactly.[81] Not until our relationship evolved and I gained her trust did she slowly begin to unravel for me "the other Palestinian problem" (Peleg and Waxman 2012). She explained that she was a member of the "48ers" *(jama'it ltamanya w'arb'een*), a descendent of a family that remained in Palestine beyond the Nakba and subsequently found itself (along with 170,000 other Palestinians or 10% of the original population) on the Israeli side of the "Green Line" (Ghanim 2010, 110).[82] She explained that Nazareth, her hometown, belongs to the Galilee in the north which, along with the Triangle in the center, the Naqab in the south and a few "mixed" cities like Haifa, is where the majority of 48ers live (Kanaaneh and Nusair 2010, 9). She explained that the Palestinian villages, towns and neighbourhoods within these areas "suffer from inadequate or nonexistent public services;

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[81] The Second Intifada (uprising) was sparked by the intrusion into the al-Aqsa Mosque by then head of the IDF Ariel Sharon. It culminated with the imposition of a blockade on Gaza, one which continues into the present day (see for example Hajjar 2005, 235).
[82] Agreed on the 12 January 1949 the Rhodes ceasefire agreement, negotiated between Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, brought an end to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and established an armistice line between Israeli and Jordanian forces that lasted until 1967 and the Six-Day War (Ben-Dror 2012, 881).

underfunded municipalities, schools, and medical services; and lack, for example, paved roads and operating sewage systems" (Ibid, 9-10). She explained the humiliation of being a second-class citizen, "symbolically, structurally and practically" (Ibid, 2; see also Ghanem, Rouhana and Yiftachel 1998), of squatting in a house belonging to a Palestinian family disabused of its right to return and only yards away from your own family's original home, now inhabited by Israeli Jews (Abu-Lughod and Sa'di 2009, Slyomovics 1998); of being hired as a day labourer on your old farm, now controlled by Israeli agricultural settlements (Meari 2010); of having basic elements of your family history such as "who begat whom, where, and with whom" rendered criminal by a bill banning commemorations of the Nakba passing through the Knesset (Ghanim 2010, 12); and of being identified as an Israeli in front of your Arab classmates by some thoughtless teacher on your first day of high school in Amman.

She explained all of this in Arabic. Out of practice, I laboured to keep up at first. I misgendered my nouns and my capacity to express myself was curtailed by my weak diction. Writing about her own difficulties speaking Arabic to people more fluent than her, D. Al-Saleh (2018, 577) expresses how "it's hard to suddenly become the less eloquent one—to abruptly forgo [a] position of authority and render yourself vulnerable—even if you trust the person and want to practice." The fear of making a mistake in a language that is meant to be your first certainly is discouraging, as is the fossilized version of yourself such mistakes unearth. Speaking to Sawsan made me feel as though I were twelve again, lumbering and indecisive. Like the world in which I had come to feel so comfortable had, once again, become impenetrable. Equally, though, speaking about Palestine in Arabic affected me in a manner similar to how "reading Palestine in Arabic" affected Ghassan Hage (2008, 64); it added to the Palestinian question "an unquestionable layer of emotionality" English cannot, by tapping into "some structural

complicity between my earliest and therefore deepest emotional structure and the structure of the Arabic language." This emotionality helped me to gain an appreciation for the heft of Sawsan's Palestinian identity, of the "sacred ghosts" preventing her from being free to assume a different perspective on the Green Line, all the "dispossessed kin, bombed children, traumatized parents and grandparents" demanding her allegiance to their side of things (Rozmarin 2010, 184; see also Davoine and Gaudilliere 2004). One day, when I asked for her opinions on Said (1994, 332), specifically his idea that the experience of displacement can be redeemed by the "unhoused, decentered and exilic" consciousness of the displaced thinker and artist, she responded, "Said is the pampered son of a powerful family and his ideas reflect this. He has taken his privilege and turned it into a philosophy."

Was she wrong? It's true after all that the Said family belonged to a small elite whose wealth enabled them to attain the highest standard of living both inside and outside of Palestine (A. Al-Saleh 2011, 82). They experienced the 1948 Arab-Israeli war primarily through newspaper clippings and radio reports, from Cairo at the height of its hedonistic illusions, British colonial education and "luxurious culture" (Said 1999, 234). From his parents' box at the Cairo opera house, Said was much too preoccupied with the Italian opera season, the Ballet des Champse-Elysées and the Comedie Française to be overly concerned with events back in Palestine (Ibid). He himself admits to being overcome by how "scarcely conscious" he was of the "scale of dislocation" experienced during the Nakba (Ibid, 231). Reflecting on his personal history, I found it difficult to reject the notion that it was Said's inclusion in privileged circles at Ivy League Schools and the United Nations that allowed him to "give up on Palestine as a place,

never to be returned to, barely mentioned, missed silently and pathetically" (Ibid).[83] By comparison, Fawaz Turki (1974, 176), a contemporary of Said's who fled from Haifa to the Bourj al-Barajneh camp in Beirut during the Nakba, describes his "obsession with the notion of Returning" to Palestine, the only place where he and his family could reconstitute "their integrity and regain [their] place in history."

Rather than expanding his horizons beyond the narrow confines of his own culture, Turki's (Ibid, 9) experience of displacement had "impoverished [his] consciousness." He could not even "pretend to begin to be impartial," certainly not with the knowledge of having

> been stateless for nearly all of my twenty-nine years; that I have lived and grown up in a refugee camp on the edge of the desert; that except for those freckle-nosed bureaucrats in the West who from time to time endorses a shipment of food and warm blankets to me, I did not…exist on the face of this globe; that I was robbed of my sense of purpose and sense of worth as a human being…and that when for two decades I feared, I feared only the cold of twenty winters, and when I dreamed, I dreamed only of the food that others ate. (15)

How could I square the ontological status of freedom for Said with the experiences of other Palestinians like Sawsan and Turki? How could I continue to assume that, "despite the exorbitant evil and suffering" endured by them and their families, "life contains, even if only ideally or as a logical possibility, a meaningfulness that derives from a transcendent source" (Bernstein 2001, 374)? From consciousness, the very source of transcendence? Was Said's belief in the inviolability of consciousness a mark of his complicity with the views and sensibilities of elite privilege? And if so, could it be said that his (1994, 327) attitude toward identity politics

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[83] Although I am here critical of Said's contrapuntalism, what Seamus Deane (2018, 67) describes as his efforts to "woo the American academy by means of culture into something approaching an ethical response to imperialism…like cajoling a cat into altruism," I would be remiss not to acknowledge that he has done "more than anyone else to make the question of Palestine better understood in North America" (Khalidi, Rashid. *The Worldly Exile: Edward Said's life and afterlives.* The Nation, May 5, 2020). If cosmopolitanism and activism are his twin legacies, I do not intend to question the former at the expense of the latter. I criticize Said only to build on his heroic efforts, with all due respect.

(“bloodcurdling appeals to Islam”) is a sort of unreflective condescension? Could the same be said of me for having chosen him as my North Star?

The Multi-Culture Industry

Was the freedom I claimed from the *hala*, my erstwhile essence, really emblematic of my acquiescence to the status quo? Since my acceptance of the knowledge of freedom was premised on my belief that its affirmation was a pre-requisite for social transformation, everything from my regulative ideals to my outlook on the relationship I had with my parents and the problem of assimilation was riding on the answer to this question. My search for one began with Theodor Adorno, the philosopher I least enjoyed studying during my time at UofT. The picture of Adorno I had from then was of the proverbial kvetch, a cantankerous graybeard incessantly fulminating about Jazz (see Oberle 2016). And yet I turned to him at this crucial juncture because Sawsan’s criticism of Said had reminded me of Adorno’s (2015, 222) criticism of consciousness construed as For-itself, “the philosophical concept that does most to exalt freedom as a conduct above empirical existence.” Accordingly, the notion of an absolutely independent and autonomous consciousness is but “an apologia for its perverted form,” complete domination from without (Ibid). In Adornoian language, it seemed to me that Sawsan was suggesting my acceptance of the knowledge of freedom, rather than delivering me from bondage, had in fact entailed my internalization of an authority significantly more peremptory than the *hala*. That source of authority or heteronomy, I discovered upon returning to my old course booklets, Adorno referred to as the “Culture Industry” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, Adorno 2005).

Via Said I had inherited an ideal of culture as a universal history of progress and enlightenment. For Adorno, however, culture no longer remains “the repository of a reflective comprehension of the [past and] present in terms of a redeemed future” (Bernstein 2005, 9).

Instead, following culture's standardization by the Culture Industry, its two main functions are to compel people to express desires and wishes created by market conditions and endorse political systems that center on the further expansion of the capitalist mode of production (Zipes 1997, 114). Accordingly, Horkheimer and Adorno (2002, 98) remarked with some irony, the Culture Industry functions as Kant's concept of pure understanding, a secret mechanism within the psyche mediating immediate experiences to fit a priori categories. The most well-known example of this is found in their analysis of "free time." This time is not only unfree in the sense that it represents the shadow side of labour (a chance to "recharge your batteries") but also in the sense that it is organized by the Culture Industry in accordance with the principles of exchange and equivalence (Bernstein 2005, 4).

During free time one is bombarded with media and advertising encouraging them to consume a variety of products that promote desires alien to their condition and in whose design their reactions are presupposed (Witkin 2003, 4).[84] The repetitive (Fast and Furious 10001) and

[84] As Robert Witkin (2002, 7) explains, "Adorno was profoundly structured and 'structural' in his thinking. There is a basic formulation of part-whole relations, a set of fundamental conditions, that recurs in all his discussions of forms and structures, from social systems to musical structures such as the sonata-allegro or the rondo. The state of part-whole relations that Adorno viewed as healthy, was one in which the whole structure—for example, a society or a work of art—develops out of the interactions among its elements. The elements in such a structuration are all open and responsive to each other, changing each other and being changed by each other, thereby giving rise to the totality that is the outcome of these relations and which remains responsive to them. While Adorno's ideal of freedom rests upon the free and spontaneous movement of parts—the individuals in a social system or the musical motives in a sonata—it also rests on the responsiveness of the parts or elements to each other, their mutual susceptibility. These two aspects are inseparable in his approach to structuration. Freedom, in Adorno's theoretic, is grounded in the sociation of individuals. It is in and through relations with others that the individual develops a substance, a solidity or plenitude. The individual in the sense of an isolated and dissociated monad lacks all substance, all power of self-determination and self-understanding, and can only be conceived as a kind of emptiness. A genuine sociality (this is something differing from and opposed to certain forms of what might be called false sociality or even pseudo-sociality such as 'joining-in,' 'fashion-following' or 'social conformity') is the defining characteristic of Adorno's 'individual.'" Adorno's brand of structuration, wonderfully elucidated by Witkin, is critical to an understanding of how his insight is distinct from classic Marxist-Weberian accounts of the crisis of subjectivity in the modern world, its being overwhelmed by institutions rationalized according to the needs of capitalist production (Bernstein 2001, 41), as well as Nietzsche's (2003) solution to it, the manful individuality of Zarathustra. The ideal social system for Adorno is one that is "constituted from below by the mutual susceptibility of individuals to one another in interactional relations from which a social whole is continuously emergent and in

formulaic (romcoms, superhero movies, thrillers) character of these products, interpreted as "cozy" by their consumers, reinforce regressive and dependent personality types that meet both the need for predictability in the market and the need for submissiveness in government (Ibid, 5). Or rather "entertainment fosters the resignation which seeks to forget itself in entertainment" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 113). In Adorno's philosophy, then, the For-itself is an ideological screen for the effects on consciousness of prefabricated impulses, tastes, ideas and preferences. Meaning the concomitant ideal of a contrapuntally derived culture of "free coexistence in which human beings organize themselves to form the universal subject and resolve the conflict between pure [reason] and empirical [reality] in the conscious solidarity of the whole" is but an ideological screen for the universality of the Culture Industry, the universality of the homogenous same (Ibid, 64).

But did I really buy all this? Was my rejection of the *hala* really an outcome of the Culture Industry's targeting of modes and appearances of life that compromise it by deficient adaptation (Ibid, 138)? I started to reflect on my childhood in order to pinpoint the moment I first experienced negativity toward the *hala* as well as the shape it took. I thought about White Oaks P.S. and my early attempts to fit in, about how I envied the other kids, the majoritarian Canadian ones, for their invisibility, their living without concern for having attention drawn to their difference. I remembered how much energy I put into concealing mine: how I would ask my mother to pick me up a few blocks from where I was so that no one would see she wore a *hijab*; how I sunk into my chair whenever a teacher asked for a volunteer to explain Ramadan; and how at lunch I would eat my "smelly" leftovers in private and as quickly as possible so as not to

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which there is a mutual and reflexive susceptibility between this emergent whole and the individuals who constitute it" (Witkin 2002, 8).

invite comment. These memories left me with a profound sense of alienation and shame. What was it exactly that inspired me to go to these lengths of self-effacement? In a piece titled “Bodily Excess and the Desire for Absence,” John T. Warren (2013) describes the Western education system as premised on the recession of the body (the In-itself) and foregrounding of the mind (the For-itself). Education, put otherwise, privileges the perspective of a universal subject emptied of all particular content. Relying on Richard Dyer’s (1988) seminal study of the racial metaphors of “white” and “black,” Warren (2013, 93) contests that this system disadvantages students of colour on account of their excessive bodily presence, as the pejorative “coloured” suggests. The advantage enjoyed by “white students” in this regard, their relative invisibility, derives from the fact that “white is not anything really, not an identity, not a particularizing quality” (Dyer 1988, 45). Significantly, this is because white it is everything, or, “white is no colour because it is all colours” (Ibid).

With some modification, I find Warren’s notion of an excessive (bodily) presence a useful heuristic for the emergence of my negativity toward the *hala*. Insofar as the Western education system is to be thought of as an outpost of the Culture Industry, as has been convincingly argued by Zipes (1997, 7, 114-15, 127), then it appears that the freedom from the *hala* I desired was ultimately the “freedom to be the same” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 136). Looking back at how my peers and I related to one another, I was struck by “how early the media penetrate the lives of children, how strong the referential system of the Culture Industry is, and how it sets the terms for socialization” (Zipes 1997, 7). Even prior to adolescence, when our social lives revolved around the pop-punk and rap music scenes, our interactions were structured around fads like Pogs, Power Rangers, Crazy Bones, Transformers and Tamagotchis. Most of all, I was struck by the scope of the desires and dreams we pinned on these silly toys, how bewitched

we were by them. Each fad summoned the potential for nothing less than a better world with a brighter sun, popularity, a greater sense of security and fully realized happiness. All that stood between us and this other world was, for example, the collection of all 151 Pokémon cards and their display in a vinyl trap sheet binder. Well, for most of us at least. In addition to the effort required to collect these holographic cards, two bewildered and working-class immigrant parents stood between me and the realization of my wildest fantasies. "Ten dollars for a pack of cards? What are these Pokémon? No way." If I'm being honest, I thought to myself, frustration with my parents "not getting Pokémon" was a critical development in the negativity that came to colour the *hala* for me. "Not getting it" is the initial sense I had of their opposition to my assimilation or fitting in, an opposition that became more definitively principled as the commodities I desired began to, more and more, imply lifestyle choices that contradicted the *hala*. And although my reaction to this opposition also became more principled, it must be noted that the reason I began to pull away in the first place was because I perceived the *hala*, and ultimately my parents, as not only preventing me from fully identifying with the commodities of popular culture but, like a stain, preventing others from identifying me with them as well.

Suddenly I felt dizzy with the apprehension of the price my parents paid to come to Canada. In addition to the comfort and support of familiar surroundings and what is for them the immensely meaningful tradition of living their lives out in close quarters with their parents, siblings, nieces and nephews, the entry fee included the health of our relationship. For despite the insight gained into the rationale behind their attempts to prevent me from identifying with the commodities of the Culture Industry,[85] the Achilles' heel of which is indeed located in the

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[85] Unfamiliar with Adorno, my parents obviously never used the term Culture Industry in their interactions with me. They did however deploy a different term which I believe evokes its effects, *mghareeb*: a portmanteau of "sick with the cold" or *mgareeb* and "the West" or *gharb*.

“acculturation” of children (Ibid, 127), I could not let go of all my resentment. Yes, blink-182 were *shyateen*, vassals of alienation and turpitude, but could that message not have been conveyed to me in a more sympathetic manner? Why couldn’t they have been more patient and less peremptory? Why was I made to feel like a fugitive? Likely because they didn’t really know what they were doing, because they were very young parents stretched to their limit, working multiple jobs to support not just me but our family in Lebanon. Still, the years of hard feelings could not be wiped away. And so, I began to think of all the families out there like mine, ones with implacable histories of hard feelings that are the result of a wedge having been driven between its members by the Culture Industry. How many X-origin youth have had their parents reduced to stains by eminently regrettable desires to identify and be identified with this or that music artist, this or that glamorous Hollywood actor and socialite? And how many X-origin parents, peering over the edge of this cliff, have reacted badly to the Culture Industry’s initiation of their children, much more harshly than they would have liked to in retrospect?

Evidently the ideal of culture I had held up to this point failed to account for the possibility of a Culture Industry which, I had to admit, clearly influenced my desire to break and be free from the *hala*. But did it necessarily follow that the entire sphere of my private existence had been gobbled up by it? How does my initiation into the Culture Industry reflect on multiculturalism, the normative ideal I turned to after the *hala*? Slavoj Žižek (1997, 44) infamously described multiculturalism as “a racism which empties its own position of all positive content (the multiculturalist is not a direct racist, he doesn’t oppose to the Other the particular values of his own culture), but nonetheless retains this position as the privileged empty point of universality from which one is able to appreciate (and depreciate) properly other particular cultures.” Accordingly, the subjective position privileged by multiculturalism, what

Žižek refers to as the empty point of universality, is precisely the position of privilege that Warren (2013, 93) identified as operative in the classroom, an absent presence. It would follow then that the desire for absence I internalized in the classroom is expressed equally in my preference for multiculturalism.

Whereas in the classroom this absence, the void of universality, facilitated my unrestricted participation and identification with star commodities, in the world outside it facilitated my contrapuntal or comparativist outlook. In both instances the outcome was the defusal of my difference and negative integration into a society of For-itselfs, a society unaware of itself (Adorno 2005, 177). For the contemporary attitude of surpassing the limitations of ethnic identity, the one which promotes individuals as citizens of the world, is an ideological project of tolerant universalism that imposes itself today as "the form of its opposite, of the massive presence of capitalism as universal world system: it bears witness to the unprecedented homogenization of the contemporary world" (Žižek 1997, 46-7). This contradiction is evident in the tension between its form and content, the way in which this attitude "functions, within its own society, as a narrow elitist upper-middle-class circle clearly opposing itself to the majority of common people, despised for being caught in their narrow ethnic or community confines" (Ibid, 47). This contradiction is evident also in the tension between Said and Turki's accounts of exile from Palestine, the tension between the views of Sawsan and me on identity politics.

Simply put, multiculturalism works in conjunction with the Culture Industry by managing the threat of deficient adaptation, the threat of particular communities demanding that their cultural, historical and ideological specifications be addressed (Kamboureli 2000, vii). This point can be better illustrated with reference to the policy of multiculturalism in Canada. As Smaro Kamboureli (Ibid, 82) explains, the 1988 Multiculturalism Act (Bill C-93), the first ever act to

enshrine into law a commitment to promoting and maintaining a multicultural society, "recognizes the cultural diversity that constitutes Canada, but it does so by practising a sedative politics, a politics that attempts to recognize ethnic differences, but only in a contained fashion, in order to manage them." The Act, as well as multiculturalism's stipulation in the 1982 Charter of Rights and its introduction as policy with the 1971 White Paper, deploys a series of sleights of hand that ostensibly respond to the call of Canada's ethnic communities for recognition without actually upsetting the conventional articulation of power in Canada (Ibid). One such sleight of hand or element of sedative politics promulgated by the Act is the notion that ethnic diversity is what binds all Canadians together (Ibid, 100). Obviously, by treating ethnic diversity as a condition of commonality, as the very thing that defines Canadianness, it loses its differential capacity; it "ceases to function as the counternarrative it has been…a thorn discomfiting Canada's nation-narrative" (Ibid). In that sense multiculturalism was the "something that had to be done to solve the 'problems' of the French, the Immigrant, and the Indian once and for all" (Day 2000, 188). In one fell swoop all Canadians became immigrants; as a legal document the Act "executes an emancipatory gesture in the name of homogeneity and unity," it overcomes difference by "releasing 'all Canadians' from the specificity of their histories" (Kamboureli 2000, 101). The ideal community for which the Act therefore lays the ground is one in which differences are nominal only, a community in which collective identifications are never to be rehearsed relationally (Ibid, 112).

And yet, by virtue of the remedial tone of the Act, echoed in the claim repeated incessantly since the 1970s that multiculturalism represents an overcoming of the shameful history of heart-breaking injustices suffered by Canada's minority groups (see for example Grant 1996, Milloy and McCallum 2017 and Mountain 2018), it is clear that at the heart of the matter

there is a silent relationality at play.[86] Day (2000, 189) characterizes it as a relationality between "Invisible self groups," those with the capacity to recognize, and "Visible, audible, and olfactory Others," those vying for recognition. What's interesting here is that these Invisible self groups, canonical British and (to a lesser extent) French Canadians, have retained their power to recognize, again despite their past crimes, by relinquishing their particularity and becoming multicultural. They retain it, put differently, by "walk[ing] off the job or abdicat[ing] the throne" (Varadharajan 1995, 21). In the final analysis it is in order to maintain a precarious articulation between it, the two dominant "ethnic groups" of the English and French and the remaining 248 registered in the 2016 census, that the Canadian state deploys multiculturalism as a "technology of governance" which in some instances constrains and in others seduces "individual bodies into becoming, that is orbiting about, nothing at all" (Day 2000, 208).[87]

Sawsan was right. My faith in the discrepancy between pure reason and empirical reality being resolved in the conscious solidarity of the whole, through the organization of freely coexisting human beings into a universal subject, was misplaced. Affirming the knowledge of freedom prepared me in the first instance to become a receptacle for the commodities of the

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[86] It must be said that "the migrant who negotiates between cultures seems curiously privileged when contrasted with that of Indigenous peoples who must consort with one world that is dead and another that remains powerless to be born" (Varadharajan 2000, 142). Without equating the experience of immigrant children in public education to that of Indigenous youth in residential schools, however, we can still divine a pattern in what Day calls the history of diversity in Canada. Then as now the Canadian government strives toward the standardization of private existence, by driving a wedge between children and their families.

[87] Remarking on the cover art of a document produced by the Canadian government entitled "Multiculturalism…being Canadian," Day (2000, 9) notes how the "disembodied Mosaic floating in an empty space" is unintentionally telling. "Canadian multiculturalism appears as neither a generous gift of liberal democracy, nor a divisive practice threatening to destroy the enjoyment of Canadianness for all. Rather, it is a reproduction of an ethnocultural economy which takes as its raw material the 'objective contents' of Canadian diversity and hopes to produce out of it a simulacrum of Canadian unity. The reality of Canadian diversity is symbiotically dependent upon this fantasy of unity—without it, a diversity simply could not exist, and certainly could not be a problem. The rhetoric of multiculturalism says that Canada is attempting to become, not a nation-state, but a self-consciously multinational state, in which all nations can see their enjoyment in possession of a national Thing. This Thing is universal, it is every Thing. But, as everything, it is also nothing at all" (Ibid).

Culture Industry; in the second, it led me to assume a normative structure, multiculturalism, that doubles as a technology of governance which, through its management of difference, further facilitates the heteronomy of said Industry.[88] The problem posed to me by assimilation, the tension between the spheres of family/home and school/society, was not the outcome of an antagonism between a parochial and enlightened culture but rather that between a particular culture and the Culture Industry.

What I was unable to recognize is that the particularity of the *hala* safeguards it against the "primacy of the general over the particular, which constitutes not only the deception of idealism in hypostasizing concepts, but also its inhumanity, that has no sooner grasped the particular than it reduces it to a through-station, and finally comes all to quickly to terms with suffering and death for the sake of a reconciliation occurring merely in reflection—in the last analysis, the bourgeois coldness that is only too willing to underwrite the inevitable" (Adorno 2005, 74). By adopting the elitist attitude of a world citizen who has surpassed the limits of ethnic identity, I was guilty of wrongly pathologizing my parents' identity politics, their politics of difference, as reflecting "skewed desires, the effects of trauma, attachments to dominant narratives or whatever unenlightened or unreflective position they cannot even realize that they are expressing" (Maldonado-Torres 2012, 82). Confusing my education in privilege for truth, I

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[88] John Fiske (2003, 2010), Dominic Strinati (1995) and other celebrators of popular culture are quick to criticize Adorno and suggest ways people can outsmart the commodities they consume, to make use of them "in guerrilla ways to liberate themselves and develop subversive forms of culture that enable them to take control of their lives" (Zipes 1997, 7). After all, are people really the dupes that Adorno seems to be making them out to be? Firstly, the guerrilla or alternative lifestyles that Fiske and Strinati assert as subversions of the Culture Industry can easily be cast as evidence of its co-opting the "dynamics of negation both diachronically in its restless production of new and 'different' commodities and synchronically in its promotion of alternative lifestyles" (Bernstein 2005, 23). Or rather the "postmodernist challenge" to the Culture Industry, counterculture, is easily integrated as a "minimal negativity" creating "new needs for new commodities" (Ibid). Secondly, "Adorno does not regard strict belief or naivete as a condition for the Culture Industry to succeed" (Ibid, 12). On the contrary, the Culture Industry's success is evident in the fact that advertising continues to work despite our seeing through it, despite all the deconstruction of its tactics.

had convinced myself that my parents were the victims of manipulation, all the while I was being contorted and disfigured beyond recognition by the Culture Industry.[89]

As I began to seriously consider this disfigurement and what to do about it, I was, by virtue of the influence of a number of faculty in UBC's Geography Department, introduced to several theorists of Indigenous cultural resurgence. I found this work intriguing as it offered something of a blueprint for "undercut[ting] the interplay between subjectivity and structural domination," one's libidinal attachments to dominant economic and political structures (Coulthard 2014, 155). I didn't see my situation as entirely analogous to that of an Indigenous person in Canada, for if anything I am as much of a settler as any majoritarian Canadian or Invisible self group. Nevertheless, I did recognize a common cause: the defense of a particular culture and people against the Canadian government's push to sterilize difference. That's why, I believe, Glen Coulthard (Ibid, 154) declines to advocate, in the manner Fanon (2004) did, for "dialectically transcend[ing]…practices of the past once the affirmation of these practices has served to re-establish us as…in the present." Because these particular practices are important in and of themselves, because class-consciousness is but another form of tacit assent to the primacy of the general. Alfred Taiaiake (1999, 5), I found, echoes this sentiment with his claim that Indigenous people "have a responsibility to recover, understand, and preserve the[ir] values, not only because they represent a unique contribution to the history of ideas, but because renewal of respect for traditional values is the only lasting solution to the political, economic, and social

[89] According to Tuan (2009, 115), the "near total neglect of the good is an egregious fault of critical social science, making even its darkest findings, paradoxically, less dark, if only because they are not contrasted with the bright lights that also make up the human picture." His is a good point. To be sure, the pain and disappointment of this inscape was not so much a consequence of having realized that my enlightenment was all bad as it was the sullying of all the good and joy that I'd gotten out of it. The tainting of those friendships I had formed on the basis of philosophy, such as the one I had with Danni, by the hollowing out of our epiphanies.

problems that beseech [us].” Intrigued by the idea of a “self-reflective program of culturally grounded de-subjectification” (SRPCGD) (Coulthard 2014, 155), I began searching for analogous expressions of nativism from the Muslim and Arab worlds.

I discovered them in the realm of literature, uttered by poets and novelists like Abdellatif Laâbi (1942-), Driss Chraïbi (1926-2007) and Ibrahim Nasrallah (1954-). The Moroccan Laâbi (2016b, 100) asked me to imagine

> what would happen if tomorrow a futurist army of Third World experts threw itself on the history of culture, literature, and all the human sciences of the West in order to reassess and reorganize them. It’s unthinkable…Yet the reverse did happen and has continued to happen for over a century and a half, and nothing seems more natural in the world of equality and universalism.

He asked me to resist the reduction of “atavism to irrational remnants of primitiveness, if not of latent racism” and assume the risk of national culture, “an epic of the body and of memory” (Ibid, 97, 103). For only “a mental reforging, a rediscovery of our heritage, a questioning and reorganization of this heritage can allow us to take the reins of our personality and destiny as human beings. At that moment we will have entered upon our own path and initiated the effective, concrete stage of decolonization” (2016a, 72). Like Coulthard and Taiaiake, Laâbi stressed “atavism” as a solution in and of itself, a bulwark against “the forced erasures of colonialism and the erosion of cultural specificity demanded by European-led Communist universalism” alike (Drumsta 2019, 204). In Chraïbi’s madden novel *Le Passé Simple* (1954), saturated by the author’s youthful indignation at being suspended between two cultures, I read about “a little monkey dressed in European style, [his] head filled with words and sentences” (in Laâbi 2016c, 74). And in a subsequent work written some thirty years later, *L'Enquête* (1981), I was introduced to a police inspector named Ali, tasked with investigating a crime committed in the hinterland of Morocco by members of the Aït Yafelman tribe. Gradually, Ali’s investigation

"peels away the layers of his acculturation and police training, reviving the stories, sensibilities, and languages of a childhood buried deep within him" (Drumsta 2019, 213; see also Prabhu 2003).

Ibrahim Nasrallah, meanwhile, has dedicated his entire career, including some twelve novels and fourteen poetry collections, to writing "*the* Palestinian novel" (Parr 2019, 43). Denied the right to return and abandoned to unwelcoming surroundings, like millions of other refugees, Nasrallah has opted to create a literary version of Palestine, "one that absorbs the structures of power like colonialism and the European nation-state into its framework instead of allowing these structures to dictate the nation's parameters" (Ibid). But as touched as I was by the works of these brilliant men of similar backgrounds, I must admit that the greatest endorsement for an SRPCGD came from Leanne Simpson's (2017, 1) encomium for the strength and promise of her Indigenous children, of a future in which the kind of alienation and self-effacement just spoken of is not only easily pointed out and named but resisted and mobilized against. Having been brought up amidst a resurgence of Nishnaabeg political, legal, linguistic and artistic traditions, Simpson says her children knew more about their cultural heritage in "their first decade than I did in my third" (Ibid). Thinking about the children I might one day have, I discovered how much I might like to be able to say something similar about them.

Denouement

Freedom is the inscape from which the problem posed to me by assimilation—the antagonism between the *hala*, the sphere of home/family, and majoritarian Canada, the sphere of school/society—emerged as the struggle of a particular culture against the Culture Industry. In this way the dialectic of my enlightenment appeared; my ambition to be free of bondage to the *hala*, to be a citizen of the world without attachments to any place in particular, led me down a

path toward a private existence standardized and administered according to the requirements of production under capitalism. To the dizzying apprehension of the extent of this standardization I was carried by Sawsan, a Palestinian 48er who invoked the privilege and resignation embedded in Said's cultural contrapuntalism. Consequently, counter-enlightenment also marks a critical shift in my attitude toward my parents and their efforts to stave off my assimilation. It marks my development of sympathy for the concern they showed, for the difficulty with which they must have endured their tortuous efforts at "working out the contradictions of authority…education, and soul-making" being overpowered by the Culture Industry, its infection of every stage of my desires and discontent (David Denby in Zipes 1997, 114).

When the existing literature on the assimilation of Lebanese-origin youth into Canada addresses what it refers to as the variability in the rates of "acculturation" between parents and children, it looks to factors such as birth cohort disparities, differing historical influences, physiological disparities or varying intensities of exposure to social pressure (B. Abu-Laban and S. Abu-Laban 1999, 142), giving the impression that the parent generation will, with the help of their children (Tastsoglou and Petrinioti 2011, 193), eventually catch up and that this catching up is indeed a desirable outcome (Hayani 1999, 302; Abdelhady 2011, 93, 107, 108, 111, 187). I believe that this is due to the unreflective celebration of multiculturalism which marks the entire body of extant research (B. Abu-Laban and S. Abu-Laban 1999, 148; Hayani 1999, 292; Tastsoglou and Petrinioti 2011, 181; Abdelhady 2011, 24), save the contribution of Al-Fartousi (2016, 197). Very little consideration is given to the history of multiculturalism in Canada[90]

[90] I do not believe that multiculturalism in Canada is doomed to remain what it is. It could undoubtedly be so much more. For his part Day (2000, 4) suggests that "[t]o escape the limitations of the modern-colonial nation-state, those who would be Canadians must traverse the unity which underlies both the problem of diversity and its solution via state 'recognition' of a system of official identity categories. Only then can the potential of multiculturalism as

which, as I have tried to show in my brief discussion of Kamboureli (2000) and Day (2000), appears as a technology of governance for minimizing and managing difference, for maintaining a delicate articulation of power that is premised on something like the desire for absence noted by Warren (2013). This oversight condemns the efforts of the parent generation to prevent assimilation, to convey a zero-sum conception of ethnic and "Canadian" identity, to being understood as an outcome of culturally inbred forms of parochialism or sexism (Abdelhady 2011, 51, 76; B. Abu-Laban and S. Abu-Laban 1999, 149; Tastsoglou and Petrinioti 2011, 189).

In the case of Al-Fartousi's (2016, 196-7) intervention in the existing literature, she abstains from uncritical adulation of multiculturalism in Canada but nevertheless conveys an understanding of the "Whiteness" of Canadian schools and society more generally as being in place "despite" the multicultural reputations of both. As I have tried to show, however, multiculturalism is Whiteness *par excellence*, a homogenous No-Thing. Again, Eurocentrism may appear as the particular content hidden beneath the universality of multiculturalism (Zine 2007, 74) but this appearance is just that: a concealment of the fact that its efficacy is derived from it being void of any particular content (Žižek 1997, 44). A failure to grasp this leads to a fundamental misapprehension of the pressure to assimilate that a Lebanese-origin youth may experience inside the Canadian public school system. To desire being like the majoritarian Canadian students, to desire their Whiteness (Warren 2013), is to be desirous of their absence, their freedom to enjoy being nothing in particular. That is the realization behind the appeal of SRPCGDs.

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radical imaginary, which tends towards spontaneous emergence, be separated from multiculturalism as state policy, which tends towards management, discipline and uniformity."

Inscape IV: Objective Irony

"It seems pertinent, given the paradoxes of decolonization, to distinguish between reflexivity as the willed paralysis of the purveyor of master narratives or even of the overscrupulous Native Informant, and reflexivity as commitment to a dialectical mode of critique."

(Varadharajan 1995, xvii)

The idea of undergoing a SRPCGD was however not an easy one to entertain. It entailed an about-face, a concession to my parents, which, again despite my newfound sympathy for their position, would shatter my being. By the prospect of reversing all my previous decisions regarding the *hala*, of tracking back up all the forks in the road I'd passed, I was filled with a kind of dismantling dread. But such was the force of my realization of the Culture Industry's preponderance for me, its clarion call, that I continued to think it. I continued considering the options I had at hand for refamiliarizing myself with the *hala*, the intellectual, political and legal traditions it consisted of. Going to White Oaks was one but I knew from experience that the sense of tradition and custom to be gained there would be significantly less dense and piercing than what I could expect to find in Lebanon. As I learned in the summer after being outed by *um* Walid, if the *hala* is an extended network or set of nodes, there is an original that the others emulate, one which enjoys institutions of far greater reach and purpose than its off sites are capable of supporting (limited as they most often are to the family and *hussainiyyah*), a *hala* far more dynamic than conservative, flourishing than recalcitrant, and encompassing than omitting. Plus, before taking the most drastic of steps, before returning to White Oaks and including my parents in the process of a SRPCGD, I wanted to be absolutely certain that rejoining the *hala* was something I could really do, that it was possible as well as desirable.

I also considered my continuing status as a student, whether it might conflict with any attempt to undercut the interplay between my subjectivity and the Culture Industry. Education, after all, is the venue in which I was first exposed to its standardizing effect, its narrowing and

weakening of the sphere of private existence, the sphere of home/family. School is where I learned to desire the freedom to be the same, the place where I came to adopt a normative structure, multiculturalism, that resulted in my acquiescence to the ruling principle of bourgeois coldness. By that same token, though, it's also where I was exposed to the thought and people who paved the way for me to comprehend this. Believing still in the healing power of knowledge, I searched for avenues through which my experience in the Canadian education system may be further redeemed. As my doctoral prospectus was due soon, its contents were on my mind. The idea hit me hard and true, like poetry. "What if I redirected the resources and efforts of my education, the primary vehicle of my assimilation, toward reacquainting myself with the *hala?* Why can't I propose to the committee an ethnography of my natal village? By contributing to greater representation of Shia Lebanese, might such an ethnography not help prevent the alienation of others? Salvation by geography once more?" I met my supervisor, like always, at Cardero's, an upscale marina-side restaurant in West Van with mountain and inlet views. A man as loquacious as he was insouciant, getting a word in with my supervisor edgewise, especially word of work, was never easy. Not until he rose from his chair, just before excusing himself, did I find an opening to ask: "What do you think?" The idea excited him very much. "What a wonderful project! Send me the receipts for any flights. Also, I have some contacts at the American University you should meet." Those contacts I never did receive but the money for my ticket to Beirut came quick. For the first time since the 2006 July War, I was headed home.

Prospectus

On the drive into the Dahieh from Rafiq Hariri Airport I recognized the usual congestion, approximately 1100 inhabitants/ha, and Shia iconography (Fawaz 1998, 29). Innumerable flags,

posters and banners portrayed the likes of Hassan Nasrallah, Ayatollah Khomeini, and Hussein Fadlallah. Here and there in the window of some corner store (*dikana*) I even noticed the odd poster of Nabih Berri sheepishly hung above, below or beside a Coca-Cola decal. Mostly I watched on in envy as my maternal cousin Basel coolly navigated the unruly roads, where "[o]ne can never take for granted that traffic laws will be obeyed. Cars do not necessarily stop at red lights unless there is a police officer directing traffic. On the other hand, they can stop for no apparent reason…Turn signals are hardly ever used, and cars can make a right or left turn from any lane, cutting across traffic" (Hage 2018, 104). All these contingencies he took in stride while simultaneously making me keel over with laughter. Evidently, I was no longer his match in the competition for the title of "funniest in the family." I'm not sure exactly why but I find Arabic, seemingly wealthier in idiom and style, to be a much funnier language than English. Or rather I find that on average Arabic speakers value locution more than their English counterparts. Along with Basel's older brother and the two oldest daughters of the maternal aunt closest in age to my mother, we had spent the years preceding the move to Canada together under a single Hamra roof. The four of them—Basel, Gaith, Ola and Batool—I regard more as siblings than cousins. Indeed, as to the *hala* that's pretty much par for the course. The significance of cousins, their pronounced presence, is a characteristic texture of its social fabric. As of course is a sense of formality and occasion. Waiting to receive me in the two-bedroom Haret Hreik apartment Basel shared with his parents, Gaith and younger sister Rawan were all my remaining maternal relatives.[91] There we were reacquainted over mallow leaf stew and, for dessert, uninhibited indoor chain-smoking.

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[91] In the Middle East Lebanon has the unenviable distinction of having the highest rates of both higher education enrolment and graduate unemployment (Sukarieh and Tannock 2019, 674). One of the unintended consequences of this, I believe, is the perpetuation of patrilineality. Convenient for visiting, yes, but likely a matter of some

After spending the first couple of days in Beirut I took a beaten Hyundai minibus to the Biqa'. One to its Bride (*'aroos lb'a*), Zahle, and a second up the foothills of the Lebanon Mountains. In my absence a roughly 30-foot-tall wooden gate had been installed at the entrance of the village, where the road narrowed into a pass. Insofar as my goal was to assess the feasibility of a SRPCGD, I passed it with the Malinowskian (in Lamphere 2018, 65) intention of "grasp[ing] the native's point of view, his [sic] relation to life, and to realize his vision of the world." My plan, simply, was to spend time with my family: my cousins, aunts and uncles, their cousins, my grandparents and their siblings. Out of this time, I hoped to fashion a small window into the *hala*, one through which I might glean a fuller appreciation of its customs and traditions. Simultaneously working on my prospectus, I believed, could facilitate this process. Using a traditional participant-observer (Ibid) model I subsequently laid out an outline for an ethnography in three parts including a synoptic overview of the village's cultural framework, a collection of the imponderabilia of its daily life and an exposition of its characteristic narratives (Ibid). Beginning to sketch in the details, however, did not have the desired effect.

Like Deeb (2006), Harb (2007) and R. and M. Abisaab (2014) have shown, the concept of resistance or *muqawama* is central to the *hala*, the cultural framework of the Biqa's many Shia villages. As a consequence of Hizballah intervening in the Syrian Civil War (2011-) on behalf of the Assad regime, the *muqawama* had taken on new connotations since my last visit. In addition to Israel, the U.S. and the prior colonial regimes of the English and French, enemies of the *hala* now included the March 14ers (members of the traditional Maronite parties, Sunna, Druze and non-pious liberal Shia) and their regional allies (the Gulf states). When my relatives spoke of or

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frustration for the unemployed Basel, a trained aircraft mechanic, Gaith, a trained chef, and Rawan, a trained architect.

alluded to these groups, they tended to portray them as either ignorant pawns or willful purveyors of a plot against the region's Iran-Hizballah-Syria axis of power (see for example El Husseini 2010 and Slim 2014). There was no real opposition in Syria, they held, only Daesh and its international backers militating for regime change. Hizballah's domestic opponents were accordingly harping on Assad's supposed suppression of pro-democracy forces in Syria in order to foment and embolden challenges to the legal status of the Party's arms (Slim 2014, 65). If Hizballah were to lose its military status and Assad his regime in Syria, then the Islamic Republic of Iran, without its allies stationed at Israel's borders, would no longer have any leverage against the Americans and fold, whether due to a "revolution" like the one in Syria or other more overt means of regime change. Then, of course, the West will have realized its intention of permanently silencing the Palestinian cause. As such, nothing less than the very conscience, the "material and spiritual progress" of the *hala*'s people appeared to be at stake in their defense of the embattled Syrian President (Deeb 2003, 5). Nothing less than their resistance.

The *muqawama*'s centrality for the *hala* meant a pro-Assad filter for everything from politics to art and entertainment.[92] However, frequent and credible allegations of war crimes levied against Assad (Hubbard, Ben. "Syria Used Chemcial Weapons 3 Times in One Week, Watchdog Says." *New York Times*. April 8, 2020) made the steady supply of invitations to align

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[92] For those belonging to my parents' generation, Egypt was the centre of all art and entertainment. One of the most famous stars from the halcyon days of Egyptian cinema is the actor Adel Imam (1940-). In 2015 he produced and starred in a mini-series called *ostaz w' raees qesem* (Professor and Department Chair) that told the story of a Syrian activist who abandoned their support of the revolution against President Assad after realizing that the protestors were paid agents (MEE and agencies. "Egypt TV drama on 2011 uprising sparks controversy." *Middle East Eye*. July 14, 2015). Adel Imam coming out in favour of the Assad regime was a boon for the March 8ers and a pity for the 14ers. In the years since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War there have been many actors, singers and comedians who have come out as either pro- or anti-Assad, causing an outroar in either case, as well as renunciations and eulogies.

myself with his regime extremely difficult to negotiate. Surrounded by the camps of some 300,000 Syrian refugees in the Biqa', I asked my paternal uncles what they thought of these allegations. Was the regime not responsible for the deaths of over 150,000 Syrian civilians? And if so, was Hizballah not guilty by association? My uncles insisted that no innocents had been killed in Syria. They claimed that Hizballah was only protecting Shia Lebanese villagers living on the Syrian side of the border, important shrines like Sit Zaynab in Damascus and Lebanon from the incursion of Daesh (Slim 2014, 64). But how could they be so sure that there was no legitimate opposition in Syria? Had defense against regime change become a ready-made excuse for persecuting enemies of the state? And the Palestinian cause as well? Many trustworthy, respectable sources (see for example Bishara 2013 and Saleh 2017) in the region and elsewhere were accusing Assad of as much. How could their testimony and evidence be discarded out of hand? "We believe in Nasrallah," said my uncles. For sure, their belief in him was unlike any I had ever encountered, automatic. A kind of unbridled devotion that I knew I was incapable of. It just altogether escaped me. Worse still, it stuck in my throat.



Figure 9: Banner in the Biqa’
Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and
Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah—
“Together toward liberation.”
(Source: Personal library)



Figure 10: Graves of Young Biqa’I Men Martyred in Syria
(Source: Personal library)

A similar problem arose for me while sorting through the imponderabilia of daily life in the village. Among the routines I witnessed were those that could be grouped under the category of gender mixing. This issue, like the issue of devotion to Nasrallah, was an iterative one, cropping up throughout my life and culminating in my prospectus. I observed, for example, that gender mixing could be expected if I was spending an evening on the roof of my grandparents' home with the families of two uncles or cousins. However, if more guests were to arrive the men and women would separate into two groups. It would happen without anything being said and, as far as I could tell, there was no magic number either, just a shared sensibility. The larger the crowd and the more formal the occasion of their gathering the less mixing there would be. At wedding receptions, held normally at an outdoor pool down in the valley, the bride, her female relatives and those of the groom would spend the evening inside a veiled canopy, dancing in what can be described as unexpectedly risqué outfits. All the males, save the youngest of the boys, would spend their evening sat in tables set around the pool about fifty yards away. "Surely," I asked Ola and Batool during their visit to the village, "this type of segregation is rooted in assumptions regarding the suitability of women to public space? Assumptions which, when institutionalized, lead to their dependence on men? Isn't that how our aunt came to decide to remain in her marriage even after discovering that her husband had secretly taken a second wife?" "First of all," they replied, "women are the bedrocks of public life here. There are all sorts of community campaigns (*hamleits*) for fund-raising, the care of orphans and food drives that are almost exclusively organized and staffed by women" (for example, see Deeb 2006, 172). "Second of all, Islam is a matter of interpretation, and while some *maraja'* (sources of emulation) may betray regressive or sexist personal tendencies, an authentic interpretation of *sharia* would reveal no such bias."

Indeed, it could well be argued that Shia legal theory (*usul al-fiqh*)[93] is in the midst of such an authentication, what Ali-Reza Bhojani (2020, 149) refers to as a justice-oriented (*'addliyya*) reading of *sharia*. Simply put, according to *'addliyya* readings of *sharia*, God's granting of reason (notions of essential praiseworthiness and blameworthiness) to humankind implies that "[r]ational, or non-scripture-dependent, morality must be a substantive condition in the validity of the interpretation of texts attempting to infer God's regulative precepts" (Ibid, 152). The "Divine Legislator," Himself a rational Being necessarily partaking in the conventions of apparent meaning and morality, can have no immoral precepts attributed to Him (Ibid, 161). This extends to any precepts that might be interpreted as curtailing the status of women in the community, because equality between men and women, writes Bhojani (Ibid, 156), is an instance of essential praiseworthiness or justness. Within a *'addliyya* framework, then, "cases of apparent conflict between scriptural indicators and relevant non-scriptural moral judgements" can be resolved using a three-stage hermeneutic: contextualization, reconsideration of authorial intent and, in the last resort, the discounting of scriptural evidence (Ibid, 152, 165). For example, in the case of *sharia* regulations that hold the testimony of women to be unequal to the testimony of men (Ibid, 167), the conflict between the scriptural indicator and the non-scriptural moral judgement can be ascribed to the context and circumstances of revelation, when women faced social impediments to understanding, say, the workings of commercial transactions that legal disputes may be centered on.

In the case of texts that have been interpreted as promoting the punishment of apostasy by death, there is a "lack of reasons to explain how a linguistic indication for the scriptural

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[93] Perhaps a more accurate translation of *usul al-fiqh* would be "roots of jurisprudence" (Calder 1999). Works in the realm of *usul al-fiqh* concern hermeneutic principles permitting deduction of law from the texts of revelation (Ibid).

evidence, which suggests that the death penalty be applied purely for a choice of conscience, could ever have been moral means that step-one contextualization is not possible and efforts must be made to reread the authorial intent" (Ibid, 168). In this instance it might well be reasoned that the intended meaning referred not merely to acts of conscience but treason and political betrayal. So long as this adjusted reading is not inconsistent with "other contextual elements and associated factors," it can be assumed to be the Divine Legislator's true intention (Ibid). When the conflict between the scriptural indicator and the non-scriptural moral judgement cannot be resolved through either contextualization or reconsideration of authorial intent, as in the case of texts promoting female circumcision, their authority must be rejected outright (Ibid, 169). As evidence of the adoption of such *'adliyya* approaches to *sharia* could be found in the rulings of Sayyids as eminent as Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah (Deeb 2006, 219; see also Deeb and Harb 2013), I was not unconvinced by the notion of authentication put to me by Ola and Batool. However, I was unsure that this type of piecemeal reform would ever lead to complete equality between men and women. Moreover, I wondered, could room in the public life of the *hala* ever be made in this way for sexual minorities? Could Islamic texts be interpreted to highlight the dignity of LGBQT individuals? In principle, yes, it seemed plausible that an Islam could be authenticated as such but in reality?[94] One day perhaps, but definitely not soon enough.

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[94] E.J. Hernández Peña (2016, 52-3) has suggested that given their shared "historical framework of difference, solidarity between the Muslim community and the Queer community [can be formed] on the fringes of the margins, where both communities exist as 'strangers' in relation to the dominant iterations of normativity that place external and internal others as second class citizens…It is from the margins that Muslims, Queers and Queer Muslims can best serve as mirrors to the suffocating policing of 'normal' imposed by the center. It is from these peripheral locations that the center's normativity can be both challenged and critiqued, and it is also from this crucial social position on the margins that Muslims can provide space and solidarity with other marginalized communities including those predicate don race, ability, gender, and sexuality." Then as now I am more than sympathetic to Peña's version of the future. Possible perhaps though, at least for now, seemingly unlikely.

Further complications to my consideration of a SRPCGD came following my meditation on what is for the villagers, and indeed all pious Shia Lebanese subscribers to the *hala*, the single most imperative of narratives. That of course would be the narrative of Karbala (see El-Husseini 2008) which, in the final analysis, is a narrative of sacrifice and martyrdom. Like the cultural significance of resistance, it too had taken on fresh meaning since Hizballah's intervention in the Syrian Civil War. Ground for a new cemetery had since been broken to accommodate men lost to the fighting in Syria, a half-dozen mostly younger than myself (see Figure 10) and judging by the size of the plot more were on the way. They will all have died with the satisfaction of becoming martyrs, of sharing an attribute in common with Imam Hosayn, the martyr icon *par excellence*. An attribute granting them access to a conceptual space described by Nasser Abufarha (2009, 234) as "much wider than the physical and social space the person occupies in life." Indeed, as Abolfazi Ezzati (2006, 118) has further clarified,

> the word [martyr] is derived from the Arabic verbal root *shahada*, which means to 'see,' to 'witness,' to 'testify,' to 'become a model and paradigm.' *Shahada* therefore literally means to 'see,' to 'witness,' and 'to become a model.' A *shahid* is the person who sees and witnesses, and he is therefore the witness, as if the martyr witnesses and sees the truth physically and thus stands by it firmly, so much so that not only does he testify it verbally, but he is prepared to struggle and fight and give up his life for the truth, and thus to become a martyr…by his struggle and sacrifice for the sake of the truth [the martyr] becomes a model, a paradigm, and an example for others…worthy of being followed.

Setting aside the many problems with comparing the battle of Karbala and the battle on the beaches of Khalde in 1982 to the Syrian Civil War, it was still incredibly difficult for me to share in the sense of martyrdom's emic salience for the villagers. I appreciated that, in general, this narrative had to be read "against the [historical] background of social death."[95] I even

[95] Via Bourdieu, Hage (2003, 78) suggests that "meaningfulness is not always offered by society; indeed society is characterized by a deep inequality in the distribution of meaningfulness. 'One of the most unequal of all

appreciated the Durkheimian altruism in committing suicide out of communal solidarity in a warring situation. But I also knew that martyrdom could be a "cult" (Fisk 2001, 556)**,** a matter of "personal status and self-esteem" (Hage 2003, 77). It could hardly be denied with all the honour bestowed on bearers of the attribute, "the funeral processions, the speeches, the photos filling the street…the relative wealth and social support their families receive" and so forth (Ibid, 79). Was killing people out of a mix of hopelessness and peer pressure really standing witness to truth (Mandel 2014, 373)? Could I be certain that it was out of anything other than that?

The Negator

I returned from Lebanon with a feeling of uncertainty as regards my undertaking of a SRPCGD. Despite having recognized the general value of the *hala*'s particularity, of its deficient adaptation to the Culture Industry, I remained unconvinced by its specific customs and traditions. For a few days after my return, I sat around my apartment, directionless and with the stuffing more or less knocked out of me. I tried working on my prospectus but the whole idea now seemed incredibly disingenuous. Then, much to my chagrin, I received an e-mail from my supervisor inviting me to present my progress to our lab. Feeling indebted to him for the generosity of his support, I tried my best to buckle down and produce something worthy of presentation to him and his other graduate students. I failed. All I could come up with was a handful of inane observations on my natal village, its people and their culture, without being able to convey any real sense of their resonance and synchronicity, their emic salience. If the prospectus was giving me this much trouble, I thought, how would I fare with a full-length dissertation? Slow death by geography?

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distributions, and probably, in any case, the most cruel, is the distribution of…social importance and of reasons for living.'"

Full of dread, I took the bus to Cardero's, through the heartbreak at Main and Hastings all the way to the West End pier. Inside the restaurant my supervisor sat with his two most senior grads, ones who also studied the Middle East. An emptied decanter near the edge of their table gave the impression that they had been sitting there a while. We spoke casually about my trip for an hour or so, my interlocuters here and there interjecting stories from their own times spent in and around Lebanon. Naturally this made me even more apprehensive, worried that they would see straight through my shallow prospectus. To my shock and surprise, however, the presentation was exceptionally well received. Everyone appeared to have been genuinely engaged by its anodyne findings. But how could this be? Why was I being deferred to? Because I was from Lebanon? Because I could speak and read Arabic? Because I had been raised a Muslim? Like lightning, I was suddenly struck by the possibility of my journey in the Canadian classroom culminating in a kind of fascination with the Other. After first instilling in me a desire for absence, the process of acculturation led me down a path to becoming a "Native Informant" (Al-Kassim 2002, 170), suggesting that I can never be certain of my motives for undertaking a self-reflective program of culturally grounded desubjectification.

Reference to Sam Whiteout's "Popularizing Wokeness" (2018) will help clarify why and what comes of its being so.[96] In his article, Whiteout (Ibid, 63) writes about people with genuine concern for social justice finding themselves today in the "precarious situation of constantly having to second guess the motives of the do-gooder and the real impact of the good done." The rapid rise in the market- and profitability of wokeness, its incorporation into "white pop-culture," begs the question: "How do we [activists and allied academics] sniff out those who do good in

[96] To be woke, at a most rudimentary level, is to be aware of social justice issues (Whiteout 2018, 63). Alternatively, it is to be aware of one's privilege.

ways that are disingenuous and intended to manipulate this trend for their benefit without actually doing the good" (Ibid)? An undeniably paradigmatic question, it might also be phrased in terms of being able to tell the difference between real social justice warriors and SJWs, their "scene"-bound epigones. Ultimately, Whiteout (2018, 67) finds that the question is immaterial, that the focus should be on taking advantage of wokeness' trendiness to "cement actual and authentic wokeness into the culture in a way that hasn't been done before." How? In part by having celebrities, actors and recording artists incrementally raise the bar for what is celebrated as woke good doing (Ibid). Setting aside for the moment the matter of trends and whether or not they can be used for good, whether or not there is room in the Culture Industry for more Gramscian kinds of hegemony (Morton 2007), I find myself in agreement with Whiteout though, crucially, for the opposite reason. The distinction between real social justice warriors and SJWs is immaterial because it cannot be drawn with any certainty, at least not in good conscience.

To say so, however, does not mean that such a distinction would be unvaluable or undesirable. Quite the contrary. Following my presentation at Cardero's, a distinction of the type was exactly what I most needed, something to assure me that my concern for the *hala* is genuine. More than anything I wanted to be certain that I'm not an epigone, that my motives were those of a prodigal son and not of yet another "colourful personality" ingratiating themselves into the critical circles of "semi-masochistic" elites who crave recognition for their wokeness (Varadharajan 1995, xv).[97] What prevented me from achieving that certainty was all the evidence

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[97] As demonstrated by Morris et al. (2020, 73), there is a problematic element of jouissance to the extant social justice zeitgeist, of "the pleasure that must be experienced to the point of excess, which you enjoy against your best interest." Put differently, it appears that social justice "has become an ideology unto itself and with a problematic kind of subjectivity" (Ibid, 65). The problem with wokeness is its compulsive quality, the way in which "each person is always chasing desire, in this case equality, and never achieving it, but enjoying the ever-growing number of populations that need to be equalized, in the case of the 'ever-waking' or the enjoyment of call-out culture and being able to lord over others lack of 'wokeness'" (Ibid, 79).

to the contrary, the fateful or Objective Irony of how cool being a “Visible, audible and olfactory Other” (Day 2000, 190) had evidently become.

After realizing that I have spent much of my life yearning for the freedom to be the same, giving into the impulse to fit in, I harboured the hope that a return to my roots could undo that mimesis, that I might thereby be returned to myself. Following Cardero’s I could no longer be certain of my motives. Not if fitting in now entailed being Other. But should questionable motives really stop me from trying to undertake a SRPCGD? Would having wokeness as a source of motivation necessarily affect its outcome? For Whiteout (2018, 66), again, it need not. Essentially his argument is: just because adding a filter to your display photo is sometimes considered trendy doesn’t mean more substantive forms of activism and social justice work can’t be made trendy as well. As an example of a positive outcome of wokeness becoming trendy, Whiteout cites the music video for the song “God’s Plan” by Canadian rapper Drake. In this video Drake is portrayed driving around Miami, Florida and distributing the budget of the video, some $900,000. “He doles out wads of cash to (mostly) unsuspecting passersby who are shocked enough to see Drake let alone be gifted who knows how many thousands of dollars. He awards scholarships, gives out cars, brings toys for every child, and donates to a women’s shelter” (Ibid). Is the video, with over ninety million views and countless re/tweets, an example of cashing in on the trendiness of being woke? Sure. But does that make it any less impactful? Didn’t Drake, as Whiteout (Ibid, 67) suggests, successfully turn its occasion “into a celebration of kindness and uplifting [of] a community?" Why can’t the video be simultaneously motivated by wokeness and impactful? Principally, those reasons related to its “let them eat cake” quality, its homage to philanthropy as an ideal of charity and giving back. I mean, if a million dollars was handed out every time a music video was made, would we still need social security? In the short-

term, the cash may have been a boon to its recipients. But, to the extent that it reinforces their allegiance to political systems that work against them, its medium- and long-term effects are obviously deleterious. Not incidentally those effects are the ones which the recipients of Drake's beneficence share in common with 90-million viewers. An effect of the Culture Industry, wokeness is ultimately self-stultifying. That means any act committed in the name of social justice that has wokeness as a source of motivation is bound to backfire.

For further evidence of this stultification, I had only to reconsider the nature of my reservations about the *hala*. Take the unproblematic belief in Hassan Nasrallah displayed by my family. I recognized the good served by Nasrallah and Hizballah; that their program, to the extent it redresses a need for greater representation and redistribution, is a social justice program. However, I did not see any reason why the mobilization of Shia could not be inspired and expressed through formal rules and procedures, more impersonal means. In retrospect, this "instinctive" preference for what Weber (1958, 215) referred to as legal-rational authority suggests wokeness as the source of my motivation, by evoking the fragility of my belief. Bernstein (2001, 126) for one maintains that only charismatic leadership, "by dint of the exemplary character of the leader or belief in her divine inspiration," enables a community to "interrupt the economic order of everydayness."[98] Accordingly, subjectively mediated relations of love, respect, veneration, trust and loyalty are "rules of reason" (Ibid) needed to marry rational inquiry and justification (Alasdair 1988, 6).[99] My inability to have faith in Nasrallah, to the

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[98] Clearly "bureaucracy too revolutionizes society, but it does so through 'technical means,' and hence 'from without'" (Bernstein 2001, 126). It changes people by first changing their "material and social orders" or "conditions of adaptation" whereas charismatic authority "operates through conversion or transformation" (Ibid). In the end what matters is "not the origin of ideas (through intuition or reason), nor their actualization since in all cases ideas gain reality through works, but the manner in which ideas and beliefs are internalized by followers" (Ibid).
[99] In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988) Alasdair MacIntyre argues that rationality is fundamentally a matter of tradition, that what is rational for one person or group of people at a particular point in time may not be so for others. "This is not the kind of answer which we have been educated to expect in philosophy," he explains, "but that

extent that it implies a dearth of rules of reason, can be thought of as a "continuation…of the inaugurating sceptical moment" (Bernstein 2001, 82). Meaning there seems to be a connection between it and the *waswâsah* which eroded the authority of my parents: "between the moment of original scepticism and the kind of reflectiveness appropriate to rationalized reason, the reflective distancing of rationalized reason, its being the rationality of reason, embeds and recapitulates the dissolving gaze of the adolescent" (Ibid). Put otherwise, the hypothetical attitude toward the *hala* I assumed as an adolescent might equally have "been a movement through which love [was] displaced as the mediating mechanism of ethical norms" (Ibid, 131); a movement through which I lost the ability to esteem what I know, and my moral understanding was dissociated from any sense of urgency (Ibid, 123).[100]

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is because our education in and about philosophy has by and large presupposed what is in fact not true, that there are standards of rationality, adequate for evaluation of rival answers to such questions, equally available, at least in principle, to all persons, whatever tradition they may happen to find themselves in and whether or not they inhabit any tradition" (Ibid, 393). The legacy of the Enlightenment is therefore an ideal of rational justification that has proven impossible to attain, "[a]nd hence in key part derives the inability within our culture to unite conviction and rational justification…In cultural, political, moral, and religious life post-Enlightenment conviction effectively has acquired a life of its own, independent of rational inquiry" (Ibid, 6). In some ways I am reminded of my own "survey course"-style education in philosophy, the way in which I was exposed to a dizzying array of positions on matters of reason and justice that were rarely if ever judged against one another. There was no sense of "contending and alternative points of view of rival traditions of enquiry [to be] systematically elaborated and evaluated" (Ibid, 399). Only an inchoate "gumbo" of contradictory presuppositions that confused and unmoored me.

[100] According to Sartre (1987, 711), the flight from responsibility was a flight from freedom to God. I would say it's more like freedom is granted by a sense of duty to God. As in the classic Kantian formulation of the moral law (see Voeller 2020), imagine someone who "says his lust is irresistible when the desired object and opportunity are present. Ask him whether he would not control his passion if, in front of the house where he has this opportunity, a gallows were erected on which he would be hanged immediately after gratifying his lust. We do not have to guess very long what his answer would be. But ask him whether he thinks it would be possible for him to overcome his love of life, however great it may be, if his sovereign threatened him with the same sudden death unless he made a false deposition against an honorable man whom the ruler wished to destroy under a plausible pretext. Whether he would or not he perhaps will not venture to say; but that it should be possible for him he would certainly admit without hesitation. He judges, therefore, that he can do something because he knows he ought, and he recognizes that he is free" (Kant in Lacan 2006, 659). To be clear, I am endorsing neither Kant nor his philosophy *tout court*. I am well aware of what Al-Kassim (2010, 172) refers to as Kant's foreclosure of the Fuegan "at the origin of Enlightenment philosophy," the preservation of "the image and the name" of the savage from which "the cultivation of Reason" is continuously invited to withdraw. I bring up this particular quality of his moral law in order to again highlight that what matters most is how ideas and beliefs are internalized.

As a vitiator of reason's command, wokeness contains the impact of reflection on the Culture Industry. It enacts the limits of its "Kantian"-like psychical mechanism or, as Morris et al. (2020, 69) find in their analysis of the contemporary social justice moment, wokeness only begets more awakening because it is caught between teleological pretensions and a postmodernist foundation. What I mean is that wokeness leads the SJW to the realization of society's antagonistic character, the idea that there is no neutral position and that struggles along the fault lines of class, race and gender are constitutive. However, by virtue of the enlightened foundation of this realization, its being founded on a rejection of meta-narrative, the SJW struggles to really take a stance.[101] And so, the combination of a lack of "rules of reason" and the awe-inspiring "diversity of common sense and philosophical strategies for relocating and explaining" traditions of social justice leads wokeness to "terminate in nihilism" (Bernstein 2001, 104). Here nihilism refers to the "destruction of experience," wherein having one involves a transformation of the individual and "emergence of a new object domain for consciousness" (Ibid, 115). As far as the emergence of a new object domain for consciousness is concerned, experience is the cognitive mode that enables the apprehension of uniqueness (Ibid, 112). What I failed to understand when I first came upon the emancipatory potential of the *hala*'s quiddity during the previous inscape, the thisness which prevents it from adapting to the Culture Industry, is that it's like a gestalt; it is a "shaped whole" (Zwicky 2019, 17) that cannot be apprehended through an aggregate of its parts, through Malinowskian synopses of its cultural framework,

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[101] This tension is evident in the insistence of SJWs on education, "this holdover of Marxism" (Morris et al. 2020, 79). The problem with education or awareness-raising is its resemblance to what Freud used to call "wild" psychoanalysis (Ibid). Accordingly, this happened "when physicians who, only having a partial grasp of the psychoanalytic process and its theories, tried to cure their patients' neurosis by telling them about psychoanalytic theory, and to quote Freud, 'these measures have just as much influence on the symptoms of nervous complaints as the distribution of menus has on hunger during a famine'" (Ibid).

imponderabilia and (meta)narratives. Put otherwise, an ethnography of my natal village was never likely to inspire real change. For that I needed to have a spiritual experience, of the kind that a sort of persistent skepticism, echoing the *waswâsah*, works to prevent me from having (Zwicky 2019, 147).[102]

To imagine a world in which I struggle with gestalt comprehension or spiritual insight is to imagine a world in which nothing would or could matter to me; in which the course of events was neutral with respect to my subjectivity; in which I am beyond meaningful change and transformation (Bernstein 2001, 114). Unfortunately, as the reservations I had about Nasrallah's authority spoke to my lacking "rules of reason," my reservations regarding the *hala*'s prescribed social roles and narrative of martyrdom speak to struggles with gestalt comprehension. Are there aspects of the *hala*'s prescribed gender roles that are problematic, sexist and unjust? Undoubtedly.[103] The same could be said of prescribed gender roles in many cultures. Of greater relevance to me is the contiguity of my thoughts concerning the comparatively progressive

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[102] In *The Master and His Emissary* (2009), renowned psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist argues that many of the deleterious aspects of contemporary Western culture involve "a sort of power struggle" between the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Each offers a unique view of the world, the former detail oriented and mechanistic and the latter underwriting the breadth and flexibility of attention, that is, gestalt comprehension. Over time, in the West especially, as people have adapted themselves to their increasingly serialized environments and interactions, says McGilchrist, the right hemisphere has, so to speak, atrophied: "I suggest that it is as if the left hemisphere, which creates a sort of self-reflexive virtual world, has blocked off all available exits, the ways out of the hall of mirrors, into a reality which the right hemisphere could enable us to understand. In the past, this tendency was counterbalanced by forces from outside the enclosed system of the self-conscious mind; apart from the history incarnated in our [Western] culture, and the natural world itself, from both of which we are increasingly alienated, these were principally the embodied nature of our existence, the arts and religion. In our time each of these has been subverted and the routes of escape from the virtual world have been closed off. An increasingly mechanistic, fragmented, decontextualized world, marked by unwarranted optimism mixed with paranoia and a feeling of emptiness, has come about, reflecting, I believe, the unopposed action of a dysfunctional left hemisphere" (Ibid, 6). Is it possible that my assimilation spurred a physiological change? Might my struggled with gestalt comprehension speak to an atrophying of the right hemisphere of my brain? Regardless, I believe there is something to be said for McGilchrist's diagnosis of what ails Western culture. If he is right, then it is very likely that the Culture Industry is a chief culprit in the imbalance between the left and right hemispheres.

[103] For a detailed and indeed ground-breaking work on gender in the *hala*, I recommend *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon* (2006) by Lara Deeb. For an equally insightful work on Islamic revivalism and the "feminist subject" more generally, see Saba Mahmood's (2005) *Politics of Piety*.

nature of Canadian culture. Meaning my inability to perceive the *hala*'s failures outside of the "colonizer's vision of progress and civilization" (Sheehi 2004, 197). Epistemologically loaded terms of comparison that flatter to deceive. In lieu of grasping these failures in their own context, I have to wonder, how much of this reservation can be accounted for by me shrinking from the tension between the demands of the *hala* and my "own" desires (Bernstein 2001, 105)? By the remoteness of the *hala*'s claims, their appearance as "a challenge to wants and needs, and hence continuously threatening [me] and under threat from [me]" (Ibid, 105)? Regarding the young men from my natal village who gave their lives to combat in Syria, as much as my hesitation to anoint them martyrs has to do with the Syrian conflict being an unjust cause—something I continue to believe—I must also admit to the silent shame of being unfit to stand witness to truth (Ezzati 2006, 118). Among other things, *shahids* are people who have proven themselves capable of experiencing meaning, of subordinating themselves to the truths they have witnessed.

If nothing else, the suddenly conspicuous subtext of my presentation in Cardero's, the fateful irony of becoming a Native Informant, gave me a much greater appreciation for the collusion of knowledge and power. Realizing that I cannot disabuse myself of skepticism long enough to have a spiritual experience, to apprehend the *hala*'s haecceity, I had to face the possibility, at last, that knowledge is neither an end in and of itself nor a source of healing. Perhaps I avoided doing so for as long as I did because I didn't want to give up on the classroom, a place which, for all its faults, had once been a refuge. But it could not be denied any longer. Being For-oneself is an existential impasse, colloquially known as "not being woke enough" (Morris et al. 2020, 65). This is evident in the malaise surrounding social justice concerns, the problem of wanting to do better, to be more sensitive to difference and equitable, without really being able to. In the Culture Industry one finds "the circulation of a very clear critique of the

system as one that endorses extermination of…particular people" without, as Rodriguez (2016, 155-6) puts it, "a sense of the system being irreconcilable to the point of political emergency." Instead, there is a sense of life having changed into a "timeless succession of shocks, interspaced with empty, paralysed intervals" (Adorno 2005, 54).

Want as the Native Informant has been to compare the heights of their capacity for knowledge with the depths of their inaction**,** I guess that in the final analysis my observation is an old-fashioned one. I wonder, though, if being a Native Informant today is any different than before wokeness had really reached fever pitch and was elevated to white pop culture (Whiteout 2018, 64). Were reminders of the misfiring of one's motives perhaps more contained to the realm of "proletaroid intellectual culture" (Bourdieu 1984)? To the "dominated fraction of the dominant class" who are, by virtue of a "process of affective homology," more disposed to showing "solidarity with the dominated and oppressed peoples of the world" (Hage 2009, 64)? Everywhere I go now I encounter my negator, someone with a radical critique of the system nestled on the tip of their tongue, a transparency I can never be exonerated of. When I was younger I had friends who would cheapen the things I liked by liking them too, because I thought they were unoriginal or "posers." And now here I am, after everything, still just a kid with scene pretensions, with "Shia Lebanese" as my favourite "b(r)and" (Jagodzinski 2005, 63).

Neuroses, Healer of Knowledge

Knowing what I know now, I would have to say that an ironic distance between me and my beliefs is what was most at stake in the competition over my allegiance and sense of identity between the *hala* and majoritarian Canada. Practically speaking, that is, and at first just with my SRPCGD. I understood that it was the right thing to do, that I needed to rid myself of my attachments to the Culture Industry and that a return to my roots was the way forward. But what

was the point of undertaking a SRPCGD if having wokeness as a source of motivation meant that my "intentions are intrinsically nonfulfillable and the object [will] always escape" (Varadharajan 1995, 79)?[104] I was stuck in a morbid state of reflective scissiparity. A "paralysis" by "unremitting exposure of complicity" (Ibid, 60). In other words, I couldn't shake that feeling from Cardero's, the spectres it had raised. Slowly I began to realize just how many of my beliefs were held in this fragile manner, at a distance and without affecting my actions, mere topics of conversation or ornamental rhetoric. On the one hand, I make so much of my ideas about politics, the wider world and my place in it. I identify intently with them. On the other hand, the decisive one, they are completely immaterial. My work, relationships and endeavours all tend to follow formulaic patterns. Over and over again, I do the same things for "the last time." And my desires remain stubbornly indeterminate, a through-station for images off my feed. By the cynicism which flowed from these revelations my youthful instincts were firmly displaced, my "fire, defiance, unselfishness and love," my ability and want to "implant in [my]self the belief in a great idea and then let it grow" (Nietzsche 1997, 115). I began to speak in neither Arabic nor English but "ironical quotation, a restless, cantankerous squinting of the eye right and left, a language of inverted commas and grimaces" (Nietzsche 2008, 474). Before long, other people had become as tedious to me as I had become to myself (Ibid, 497).

Would things have been otherwise had I never strayed off *sirata lmustaqim*? I believe that if I hadn't there would be every chance that I would still be capable of having a spiritual

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[104] Varadharajan (1995, 21) recasts the subject/object divide from "fundamental ontology" as the historically produced divide between "the feminine and ethnic [object] of the discourse of Western patriarchy and Empire" and the postmodern subject. The latter, "in representing itself as constituted rather than constitutive, has enabled the analysis of systemic relations that govern the constitution of subjects and that determine the possibilities for self-representation. This sensitivity to economies of power, desire, and knowledge that traverse and engender subjects has given postmodernism its undeniable edge. Nevertheless, precisely the political import of its strategy of displacement must be rethought when the critical gaze shifts to the other," the other who is no longer content with their refusal to "pin themselves down" (Ibid, 21, 68).

experience, the kind through which I might glean the conditions of my freedom. Yes, my parents back in White Oaks as well as the rest of my family in Lebanon are also under siege by the Culture Industry. They too consume it and, relatively speaking, are consumed by it. But if the paradigmatic struggle of the day is the one against your urge to reach for your phone, to open the application only just closed and scroll through it once more, then I have to assume that a life spent practicing submission to God would have me in a better position to persist with it.[105] Put differently, to the extent that it remains possible to resist the forces tending to the standardization of one's private existence, the sphere of home/family included, I believe it is mostly so for those with the God-given strength to resist their "instincts" for self-stultification. At least this strength appears God-given to me, abandoned as I have been to my own devices.

Such was my headspace when I suffered an extended bout of hypochondria. In a humiliating see-saw of emotion, I alternated between the extremes of fear and disenchantment, between worrying for my life and loathing it. The object of my rumination was a discolouration that had appeared on my forehead. When the idea of it being melanoma first occurred to me, I was able to reassure myself—it was too small, hardly noticeable and a single shade. Soon though, with the recurrence of the idea, my ability to bat it away waned. Over and over again, the compulsion to check the discolouration brought me to the washroom mirror. Although the initial

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[105] Over recent years there have been many newspaper articles written about screen time, like this piece in *People Magazine* from June 2020 (People Staff. "Average U.S. Adult Will Spend Equivalent of 44 Years of Their Life Staring at Screens: Poll." People Magazine, June 3, 2020), citing polling data that suggests people are spending far more time staring at phones, laptops and televisions then they would like. Despite the physical and psychical impact that they recognize significant screen time is having on them. We are told things like "it takes less than 10 minutes for the average adult to look at a screen after waking up each day—with six in 10 taking a glance within five minutes" and "almost half of parents think their kids spend too long glued to their gaming devices or phones, and 41% find it challenging to manage how much screen time they get" (Ibid). At the risk of sounding like that proverbial kvetch, I do believe that there is something paradigmatic about the struggle being waged between us and our screens over our time. It highlights how little scope for freedom there remains, to the persistent distance between us and all the different things we know.

glance was almost always comforting, it never sufficed. I spent hours every day in front of the mirror, endlessly examining my discolouration. That was the most painful part really, the inability to convince myself that nothing was wrong, that the mark on my forehead did not warrant this level of concern. The desolation came from the fact that, somewhere deep inside, I knew there was nothing wrong, that my anxiety was pointless, but still I failed to prevent myself from checking it. Eventually, after an especially disorienting session in front of the mirror, I would go to the walk-in clinic located in the plaza down the street. In the waiting room I would think about the scene that was bound to ensue after breaking the news of my illness to my parents. Invariably, though, the doctor would find nothing and send me home. The cycle would then be broken for a few days, until the mood of convalescence had withered away. I spent the better part of six months like this, going back and forth from the doctor's office.

Just as when I was a kid, listening to emo music while sad to make myself sadder, on a particularly dour evening during my bout of hypochondria I picked up a copy of *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life* (Adorno 2005). If philosophy once entailed instruction on the good life, Adorno's inversion of Aristotle's *magna moralia* asserts that, due to the withering of the possibilities of ethical existence, "all philosophy can do is to survey the damage, to read the ruins of ethical life as a negative expression of what has been lost" (Bernstein 2001, 40). The forlorn aphorisms therein were having the desired effect when I came across one titled "How nice of you, Doctor" (Adorno 2005, 25). It started off like the others, with an ominous prognostication: "There is nothing innocuous left. The little pleasures, expressions of life that seemed exempt from the responsibility of thought, not only have an element of defiant silliness, of callous refusal to see, but directly serve their diametrical opposite. Even the blossoming tree lies the moment its bloom is seen without the shadow of terror; even the innocent 'How lovely!'

becomes an excuse for an existence outrageously unlovely" (Ibid). Suddenly, the aphorism took an unexpected turn: "There is no longer beauty or consolation except in the gaze falling on horror, withstanding it, and in unalleviated consciousness of negativity holding fast to the possibility of what is better" (Ibid). No beauty *except* in the unalleviated consciousness of negativity holding fast to the possibility of what's better? What exactly did that mean? Was Adorno suggesting that reason for optimism could be found in the moment in which one realizes that nothing remains innocuous? Where exactly? Having exhausted the explanatory power of my own reading of Adorno I looked to more distinguished interpreters for help.

In her own struggles with reflective scissiparity,[106] Asha Varadharajan (1995, xii) discovered the "need for a theory that is sensitive both to the complicity between knowledge and power and to the possibility of resistance on the part of the objects of the power-knowledge nexus."[107] Adorno, she suggests, offers the "double opportunity" to critique "the manner in which knowledge is produced in the service of colonialist appropriation" without giving up on the production of knowledge as "the cause of emancipatory critique and of resistance" (Ibid). In other words, Varadharajan (Ibid, xiii) reads Adorno against Derrida's influence on Spivak

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[106] "I was subject," Varadharajan (1995, xxi) explains, "to all the familiar confusions: English became synonymous with education, my training in teaching English as a second language involved indoctrinating my unwilling students in received pronunciation, and my incipient feminism rested firmly on the conviction that female emancipation was inconceivable outside the discourse of Western modernity. Unpleasant reminders of this investment continue to taunt me in Anglophilic America, where I am routinely complimented on my 'English' accent."

[107] Without expending much ink on colonialism as such, Varadharajan (1995, 138) finds in Adorno a critique of reason that has "become indispensable to the affirmation of otherness, the resistance to global capitalism (the particularly virulent contemporary form that colonialism has assumed), and, crucially, to the discourse of modernity that arrogates to itself the 'regulative political concepts' that encode the claims of nations within decolonized space…the epistemological practice that affirms the 'preponderance of the object' recognizes that postcolonial intellectuals, like the subaltern in whose name they speak, cannot afford the luxury of cognitive failure; they can only undertake to risk such (im)possibility." I would like to second this assessment of Adorno's philosophy as indispensable to the problematic of reflective scissiparity, to navigation of the aporia which congeal into the figure of the Native Informant.

because “both the subaltern object and the Native Informant are better served by Adorno.”[108] In the instance of the Third World Woman, Adorno’s insistence on the “propensity to error and self-interest” existing in tension (as opposed to logical contradiction) with “the potential for change” avoids the “patronage of a stance that leaves the ‘real’ work of revolution to the ‘other’ while intellectuals confine themselves to refining epistemological categories on [their] behalf” (Ibid, 60, 86). To Native Informants, Varadharajan (Ibid, 25) believes, Adorno provides an example of a perception inured to the limits of knowledge that need not reduce everything to a choice between “reverse ethnocentrism or essentialism and a resignation to absence and silence within ‘white mythologies.’” Accordingly, the difference between Adorno’s critique of the Iron Cage, of a bureaucratically administered world, and the poststructuralist theories of Derrida (2012) and Foucault (1966) is that the former does not pit the object of analysis (i.e., the Third World Woman) against the investigating subject “in stark, antithetical terms” (Varadharajan 1995, xvii). For “[e]ven the estranged appearance of reality…harbors, if nothing else, the truth of reification and thus can be unriddled to elicit something besides its deceptive appearance” (Ibid, 90). By alerting her to the tension between thought and the moment it contemplates its dissolution in the object, Varadharajan (Ibid, xxi) claims that Adorno led her to affirm her “neurosis.” Not only as evidence of the incompleteness of her adaptation to what I have been referring to as the Culture Industry but the very “source of the healing force…of knowledge” (Ibid).

[108] It is clear to me that Spivak (1993) herself is all too aware of the limitations of her project. Indeed, if the intransigence of her writing style can be put down to one of its elements it must be the confessions by which she forestalls criticism (Hiddleston 2010, 152). My point here is not to repeat the critiques of Spivak previously levied by the likes of Terry Eagleton (1999) or Benita Parry (1987). Rather I seek, as I believe Varadharajan has, to contribute to Spivak’s immense oeuvre my own manner of dealing with the tensions that riddle my positionality.

The synchronicity[109] in Varadharajan's choice of the word "neurosis" startled me. Was she speaking metaphorically, or had she gone through something similar? How might one affirm neurosis as a source of healing for their knowledge? What exactly did my concern over the discolouration on my brow have to do with reflective scissiparity? After some reflection I realized that Objective Irony and my episode of hypochondria share the same truth content. Through them I have my unfreedom demonstrated to me, within myself, by something alien to me (Adorno 2015, 222). They equally prey on an inability to convince myself of what I know. To really esteem it. The crucial difference is that the added jeopardy of the hypochondria, its progressive colonization of my time and energies, effectively underscores why I "cannot afford the luxury of cognitive failure," why I must continue to try and "undertake to risk [the] (im)possible" (Varadharajan 1995, 138). Risking the impossible here entails the pain of falling short, of having your intentions misfire. Of revealing oneself to be a latecomer and epigone. In the sense that it is synchronous with reflective scissiparity, the discolouration helped me to see how my dejection itself had become a pillar of society, by thwarting my better potential, "and thus the objectively better condition which [I] might bring about" (Adorno 2015, 298). In that

[109] As Main (2004, 1) explains, synchronicity is the idea of Jung's that poses the greatest challenge to "mainstream western culture." Indeed, "[p]roperly appreciated the existence of such 'meaningful coincidences' requires, in Jung's view, a fundamental revision of the prevalent scientific, religious, and commonsense views of the world…[S]ynchronicity suggests that there are uncaused events, that matter has a psychic aspect, that the psyche can relativise time and space, and that there may be a dimension of objective meaning accessible to but not created by humans. The implications of all or any of this are far-reaching. If there are uncaused events, particularly at the level of ordinary human experience, this means that our familiar forms of explanation in terms of later events being caused by earlier ones will have to be supplemented. If matter has an inalienable psychic aspect, then scientific descriptions of the world that aspire towards completeness can no longer be framed solely in material terms but will have to take account of psychic properties of meaning and value. If the psyche can relativise time and space, then it becomes possible for temporally and spatially distant events somehow to involve themselves in the here and now without any normal channel of causal transmission. If there is a dimension of objective meaning, this implies that the meaning we experience is not always or entirely our subjective creation, individually or as a species, but that we may be woven into an order of meaning that transcends our human perspective" (Ibid, 2).

sense Objective Irony, by making it “unconscionable and thereby inconceivable, simultaneously makes the thought of transcendence [it] contained unavoidable” (Bernstein 2001, 427).

What Varadharajan meant was that the risk of discolouration exists in tension with the hope for change. Wanting to believe that the tasks of “representation and decolonization in the name of the subaltern object” (1995, 38) were still possible, I applied this principle of affirmation to each. As concerns representation, what affirming my neurosis amounted to was readily apparent. Indeed, I laughed when it first occurred to me. “What if I swapped my natal village for the process that led me to assume it as an object of study? The tension between my discolouration and a SRPCGD?” A burst of creativity overwhelmed me, the promise of the idea and the surprising energy it generated. I wrote down some thoughts: “ethnography = ideology of immediate representation. Autoethnography = experimentation conducive to ideating and simultaneously thinking through hegemonic discourses.” Cursory research subsequently revealed further synchronicities. For example, in *Writing Culture* (Tyler 1986, 132) I read that evocative or “postmodern” ethnographies have the upside of evoking transcendence without feigning it in the text, hope without accommodation. I even found an encyclopedia entry detailing the contributions to the epistemology of certitude made by Shia thinkers like Ayatollah Mutahhari (1919-1979) and the lay intellectual Ali Shariati (1933-1977), thinkers who maintained that “belief gives moral direction to knowledge” and that evidence of belief is in “transformative social and political action” (Clark 2017).[110] Before I knew it, I had sketched out an entirely new and exciting idea for my dissertation.

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[110] Deborah Black (2018, 96) explains that “while medieval Islamic philosophers, like their Western counterparts, did not recognize a distinct area of philosophical inquiry under the rubric of epistemology, epistemological speculation was unusually predominant in classical Arabic philosophy.” For example, Ibn Sina (Latinized as Avicenna) defined certitude as resting “primarily on the psychological state of the knower” (Black 2013, 133). His focus on “second-order belief, or ‘knowing that one knows,’ represents something of a departure from the traditional

As concerns decolonization, however, the meaning of affirming my neurosis was less apparent. And so, I sought out some histories or aetiologies of hypochondria, now referred to as obsessive compulsive disorder. What I found pointed me in the direction of *Totem and Taboo* (1946). In what is considered a seminal study of the condition, Freud (Ibid, 88) alleges that sufferers of OCD have inherited an "atavistic" inclination toward violence. Following an altercation with their parent/s in childhood, usually involving them being reprimanded over a sexual misdemeanour, they are said to have internalized this violence and redirected it against themselves (Ibid). Accordingly, the degree of their painful conscientiousness is a correlate of how badly they want/ed to hurt their parent/s (Ibid, 185). The peculiar temperament of obsessive compulsives is considered by Freud to be "atavistic" because it supposedly compels them to re-enact a previous phase of humanity, the one in which the first brothers slew the horde father and replaced him with the incest taboo (Ibid, 183).

To the extent that "compulsion neurotics" suffer from an overactive superego Freud found them to resemble "primitive man," for the sublimation of their instincts in the interest of "cultural demands" entails "the most prodigious psychic efforts" (Ibid, 88). Freud thus vacillated between a critique of society as "blindly, unconsciously internalized social coercion" and an endorsement of it as "sublimation beneficial to culture" (Adorno 2005, 61). Or rather, his ardent secularism blinded him to the possibility of culture requiring something far greater than the

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Aristotelian criteria for knowledge, where the emphasis is on the nature of the objects known, rather than on the strength of belief or conviction possessed by the knower" (Ibid, 122). Ibn Sina's is a social epistemology, then, because it "accepts that ethical principles can only be established on the basis of the consensus of a community of individuals through the laws of a national, religion, or similar institution. He rejects the claim that there is any intrinsic necessity in even seemingly unproblematic propositions such as 'Lying is bad.' The goodness and badness of human acts cannot be intuited intellectually; rather, their recognition is conditioned by upbringing, by the moral agent's individual temperament and experience, and by various other social influences" (Ibid, 136).

superego, than unconsciously internalized social coercion. [111] Something like spiritual insight. So far as my assimilation into Canada is concerned, Freud's theory of the superego underscores the family history beyond the trauma of my assimilation. It allowed me to see the missing piece of the past cathecting the compulsion to check my discolouration. In retrospect, preferring my natal village over White Oaks as the site of my ethnography spoke volumes. I had been behaving in a way which suggested a resistance to processing the past. If I was to succeed in undoing the effects of my assimilation, however, the discomfort threatened by such a confrontation had to be risked. Moreover, Freud's diagnosis of the conscientiousness of compulsion neurotics allowed me to see that the past traumas I was avoiding were themselves lasting connections to the *hala*. The overactivity of my superego gave away as much. Otherwise, my adaptation to society would have been seamless. And so, I set about the work of tearing down my defense mechanisms, the type of searching for the past that, requiring professional help, mostly falls outside the remit of this text.

In the meantime, I e-mailed my supervisor and requested that we meet to discuss my dissertation, "preferably on campus." Inside his office later that week I struggled to remember if I'd ever been before. There was a large cardboard box in the corner of the room. Through a slit on the side, I recognized the jacket of his new book. A hurried greeting gave me the sense that I

[111] Freud maintains that the earliest human communities were organized in a manner similar to lion prides, wherein a single adult man lorded over his female concubines until a male offspring successfully challenged and replaced him. The cycle is said to have continued until "[o]ne day the expelled brothers joined forces, slew and ate the father, and thus put an end to the father horde...[T]he group of brothers banded together were dominated by the same feelings toward the father which we can demonstrate as the content of the father complex in all our children and in neurotics…after they had satisfied their hate by his removal and had carried out their wish for identification with him, the suppressed impulses had to assert themselves…They undid their deed by…denying themselves the liberated women" (Ibid, 184-6). Much of the truth that I find in Freud is on display in his origins story. Quite easily it can be read as a critique of society, or more exactly the super-ego, as internalized coercion. But then, as Adorno (2005, 61) notes, Freud curiously ends up endorsing the super-ego as beneficial to culture. The reason for Freud's equivocation, I believe, is his own negative experiences with religion, his open disdain for elements of Judaism (see Girard 2004). Within Freud's (1936) schema God and the Father are equal, meaning he prefers the legal-rational authority type that their death paves the way for.

was expected to be brief. Trying, and largely failing, to resist it I began to explain why I wanted to pursue a project different from what had been outlined in my prospectus. I presented to my supervisor the problem of reflective scissiparity, of the most particular being the most general (Adorno 2005, 45), and how, to quote Fischer (1986, 199), my subsequent “ethnic search is a mirror of the bifocality that has always been part of the anthropological rationale: seeing others against a background of ourselves, and ourselves against a background of others.” I explained the irony of my becoming a Native Informant and how it had left me ruing a choice between reverse ethnocentrism and an endless cycle of deconstruction (Varadharajan 1995, 89). I explained how I had made too little of my accomplishment, my recognition of the overarching irony of my experience in the Canadian classroom, and that it exists in tension with the possibility of undoing the effects of my assimilation. I explained to him why I wanted to engage this tension with an autoethnography that blended phenomenology and creative nonfiction—because as writing techniques these better address the problems of representation and authenticity (Abdallah 2017, 172) inherent to Objective Irony. Because they take for granted that “science is in, not above, historical and linguistic processes” (Clifford and Marcus 1984, 2). And because Hassan Nasrallah himself had defined resistance as a methodology (Harb and Leenders 2005, 189).

I explained that the focus of the piece would be a version of myself, a Shia Lebanese-origin graduate student, Zolo, who becomes obsessed with a discolouration above his brow; a metaphor for his inability to esteem what he knows, an inability that enjoins “the somatic to the psychic and the cognitive” as well as “the discursive to the material” (Varadharajan 1995, 19). I explained that the piece would unfurl over three “Dialogues” and three “Flashbacks”; that in their alternation a confrontation would be staged between Zolo’s enlightened exchanges with

Socratic[112] figures and the bubbling remnants of his autochthonous cultural experience (Drumsta 2019, 213). I explained the relevance of such a project to geography, how it addresses the discipline's lack of a *Writing Culture* (1984) type critique of ethnographic realism. I explained how it also would address the influence of whiteness on geography's institutional policies and practices, the way they affect geographers of colour (Mahtani 2006, 22), which remained a significant oversight in a field which Richard Schein (2002) described as whiter than professional golf. Finally, I explained how much I had been energized by the idea, all the hope it had given me.

His displeasure my supervisor could not conceal. He told me that I was being "self-indulgent," that he'd served on the committee of a "creative" dissertation before and found the process "interminable." He gave me an ultimatum: either reconsider my decision or find "a different shepherd." I had the week to think it over. Intimidated, I spent the first few days waffling. How did I fail to see that he might be offended by the idea? That he might find the figure of the negator objectionable? Did I really care to cross a preeminent name in the field? What chance of finding employment did I stand without his reference? And in any case, was my idea not a Pollyannish one? From the beginning I had been told that a dissertation was something to "just get done," that only "gormless losers" turn their occasion into quixotic journeys of self-discovery. Was I even capable of the project I had pitched? How could I guarantee it would amount to more than a failed attempt at self-revelation? A boring, conceited piece of writing

[112] In antiquity Plato and Xenophon wrote the dialogues we now consider Socratic "in a burst of creativity, influenced by and in competition with one another…[and also] in compensation for the loss of [their friend and teacher] Socrates" (Redfield 2017, 127). To his students Socrates had provided a much-cherished example "of a life devoted to ethical discourse and practice" (Ibid, 128).

without scholarly merit? I decided that my supervisor had a point. That I should persist with the original plan.

No sooner had I taken that decision, however, than the discolouration, following its longest absence since the episode began, reappeared. I began wondering if allowing an ironic distance to seep in between my autoethnography and I was paramount to committing to life in front of the washroom mirror. Besides, if I didn't have the courage to risk the cringe of a failed attempt at self-revelation, how could I possibly expect to risk processing the past? Wasn't the ultimatum from my supervisor precisely the kind of opportunity I had wanted my dissertation to provide me with? Here it was, a chance to practice esteeming what I know. A chance to assume a posture intimately associated with my forebearers, of righteous resistance against an indomitable force. Could the efforts of my education be redirected toward a greater end than that? The search for a new shepherd I began before the week was up.

In keeping with expectations, my choice was well and truly punished. It took over a year to assemble a new committee. The next I couldn't afford tuition and had to defer, returning to the doldrums of the "gigified" service sector. Then, after saving enough to re-enroll, I proceeded to stumble over every hurdle ahead of the finish line. Time after time I was given good cause to pack it in, write something different or just quit. On many occasions I felt like cracking under the pressure. And still others when I again doubted my ability to see it all through.

But I persisted anyway, in the hope that between processing my family history and applying the *hala*'s ideal of resistance in a determinate way within the context of my life, I might begin to restore my capacity for spiritual experience, for believing in what I know. This hope held my dream through the cold nights and winters, nourishing and guiding it to become the dream it was meant to be.

Denouement

Objective Irony is the inscape from which the fate of becoming a Native Informant emerged. It revealed what was most at stake for me in the competition over my allegiance and sense of identity between the *hala*, the sphere of home/family, and majoritarian Canada, the sphere of school/society. Ultimately, a kind of knowing that lacks conviction. A state of persuasion Ibn Rushd (Black 2013, 122) may have defined as "doxastic," as "when one simultaneously holds that the opposite of what one has assented to is possible." If, as I have argued, the Culture Industry is a "Kantian"-like psychical mechanism that accommodates experiences to the status quo, then an inability to esteem what I know is indicative of my assimilation on multiple levels. The discursive/material level of not esteeming what I know is felt as the danger of becoming a Native Informant, of insights from critical reflection upon the Culture Industry being reduced to ornaments with which to festoon oneself. The psychic/somatic level played out in my struggles with demonic whisperings, first with the *waswâsah* and then the discolouration. They left me wondering, how many Native Informants and postcolonial intellectuals must connect the dots between their cultural miscegenation and mental health struggles before the cost of adaptation, the brunt of which born by the sphere of home/family, is taken seriously?[113] Aside from Al-Fartousi (2016), the existing literature is quick to downplay this cost. Perhaps this could have been otherwise had the existing literature taken a more time-variant look at the problem of assimilation posed to Lebanese-origin youth in Canada. Construed not as static, translucent and available immediately to experience but unraveling across time and space, interpreted and interpreting. What I hope will be clear by now is the necessity of the

[113] From Fanon (2008) to Du Bois (2008) and others since (see for example Tabensky 2008 and Hook and Truscott 2013) the question has been raised: What is the psychological impact of contact with the West? Evidently, the need for an "ethnopsychiatry" remains as pronounced as ever.

phenomenological method adopted in this chapter, that Objective Irony is a cumulation of events and that the order in which they occurred matters. Only with previous inscapes in mind does its impact become legible. Similarly, it is only in light of this impact that the risks taken in the next chapter can be justified.

Conclusion

This chapter unfurled the four phases of my understanding of the problem posed to me by assimilation. To address both the material and psychological determinants of these phases of understanding, I explored the era of interiority or "inscape" corresponding to each. They included Prevarication, the phase in which I first discovered the antagonism between the *hala* and majoritarian Canada; Detachment, the phase in which I construed it as an antagonism between a parochial culture and multiculturalism; Freedom, the phase in which I realized that the antagonism was between a particular culture and the Culture Industry; and, finally, Objective Irony, the phase in which I discovered the true stakes of my assimilation. With the last inscape the reader was returned to the outset of the dissertation, the question of how best to ideate the experience of Objective Irony while simultaneously unthinking established and hegemonic mental maps. The following chapter presents my attempt at an answer to this question.

Chapter 4: Evocations

The argument I advanced in favour of what follows in this chapter, experimentation with writing style in academic settings, was twofold. Firstly, in some instances experimentation of this sort may be required to address the persistence of an ideology claiming immediacy of experience and representation. Experimentation helps me to think through and ideate my experience as a (Shia) Lebanese-origin youth while simultaneously unthinking established and hegemonic mental maps. Secondly, the risk of making art today, in the age of mechanical reproduction, echoes the risk assumed by postcolonial intellectuals. In both cases, paradoxically, the threat of being a latecomer or epigone is what opens the door for it to be otherwise. When adopted as a style, this threat provides a sense of rigor or "negative truth" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 103). Hence "the moment in the work of art by which it transcends reality cannot…be severed from style; that moment…does not consist in achieved harmony, in the questionable unity of form and content, inner and outer, individual and society, but in those traits in which the discrepancy emerges, in the necessary failure of the passionate striving for identity" (Ibid). The tension in the present chapter between the painful return for Zolo of missing pieces from his personal history, the Flashbacks,[114] and his enchantment by Socratic figures, the Dialogues,[115] is

[114] The flashbacks consist of details arising from interviews with family members regarding their experiences of the Civil War and in particular the events of the initial melee of 1975, the Israeli invasion of 1982 and its early aftermath from 1990-5. Against the potential charge of anachronism, I would reiterate the commitment of this chapter to recovering the truth of the past, an autochthonous cultural experience that is transpersonal in its historicity.

[115] The dialogues in this chapter are Socratic in the double sense of the word. They concern the relationship between ethical discourse and action and, perhaps more importantly, are an ode to my friends. Returning to Tuan's (2009, 115) remark regarding the "near total neglect of the good" by critical social science, a neglect which paradoxically makes its darkest findings less dark, it is the sense of competition between friends inherent to it, the loving "burst of creativity" (Redfield 2017, 127), with which I wish to contrast my interpolation by Western philosophy. For the longevity and impact of the dialogues written by Plato and Xenophon are nothing if not a testament to the bond of friendship.

intended to evoke the tension between my discolouration and the hope for change. This tension is ambivalent feeling, resisting of synthesis. And necessarily so, for both of us will "get exactly as far as the truth [we are] able to attain…this truth of [our] history" (Lacan 2006, 219). Zolo's journey unfolds over two days set several weeks apart.

List of Characters

(in order of appearance)

- ***Z/zolo:*** The negated.[116]
- ***Gabriel:*** The negator.
- ***Lena:*** Mother of the negated.
- ***Toufiq:*** Father of the negated.
- ***Yahya:*** Maternal uncle of the negated. Deceased.
- ***Mike:*** Roommate #1 of the negated. Lush.
- ***Dauri:*** Roommate #2 of the negated. Flaneur.
- ***David:*** Classmate #1 of the negated. Immigration lawyer
- ***Nusheen:*** Classmate #2 of the negated. Kurdish nationalist.
- ***Franny:*** Classmate #3 of the negated. Artist.
- ***Upjeet*****:** Classmate # 4 of the negated. Muse.

[116] Zolo prior to his negation and zolo thereafter.

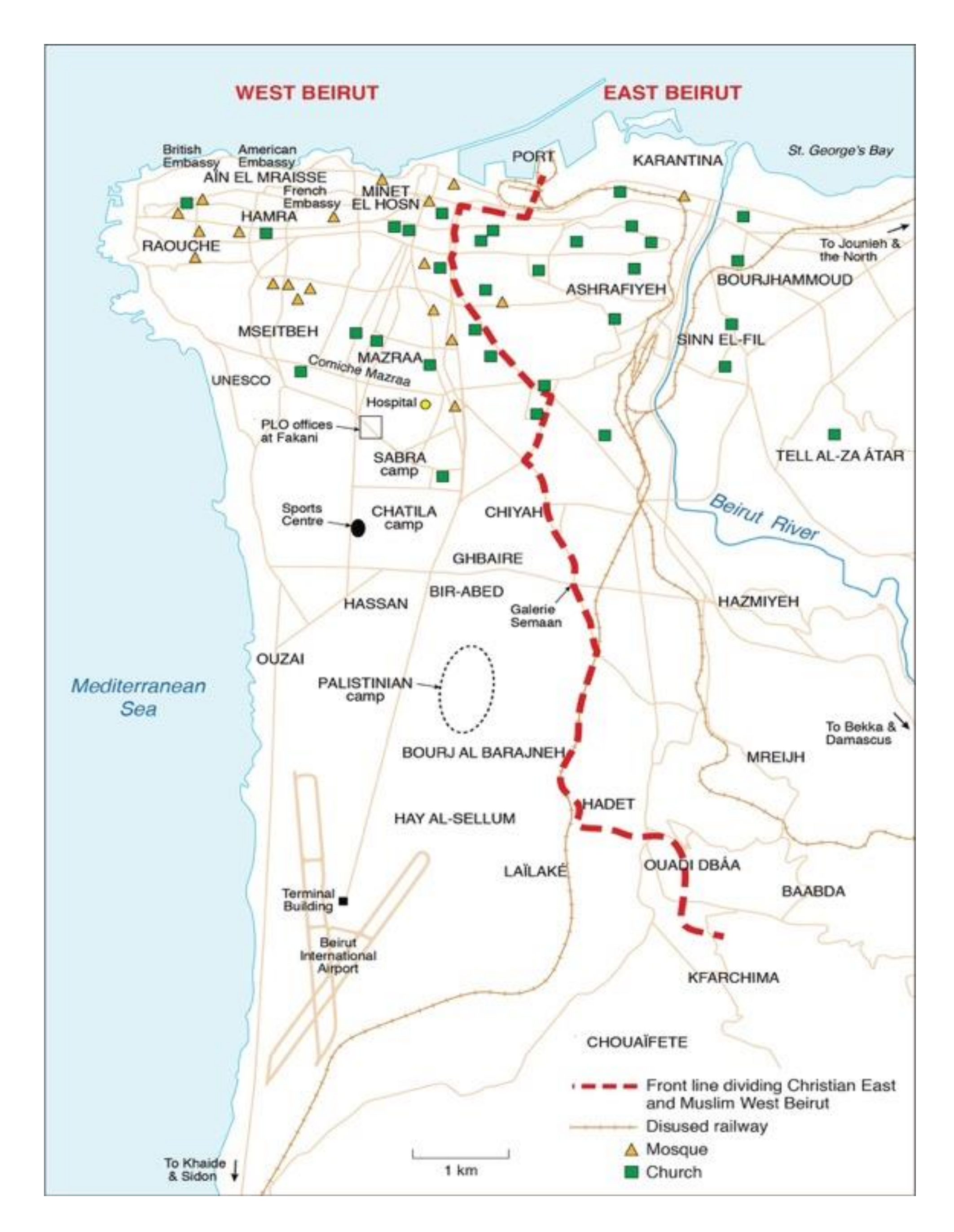


Figure 11: Map of Divided Beirut
(Source: Eric Leinberger, UBC Geography Dpt. Cartographer)

Dialogue One: The Great Negation

The jejune quality of his Arabic had rendered the transcription process especially ticklish. On account of it, Zolo was struggling to get through the interview with his parents that he'd conducted before leaving for Chmstar. He stopped to reflect on his mother's over-preparedness for the occasion of his return to the family home. An elaborate multi-course meal suitable for a party twice their size had been prepared, after which they drank Turkish coffee in the second living room. The downstairs living room was for the day-to-day, replete with comfortable furniture, a television and family photos. The one on the main floor was reserved for guests, a *diwan* for *diouf*, and filled with decidedly less comfortable effects. His father, who Zolo addressed with the honourific *hajj*, had sat on a single sofa chair opposite him, beneath a faux-gold display of the ninety-nine names of God, hanging like grapes from a vine. Pressing record, Zolo asked his parents to tell him what they remembered about the beginning of the War. His mother spoke first.

> **Lena:** I was attending a school in Ein al-Rumaneh when the bus incident occurred.[117] I remember how there was suddenly a great deal of commotion outside and then being sent home. My friend Mona with whom I always walked, a Christian, promised to get me through any Phalangist (Maronite) checkpoints and I promised her the same for those set up by the SSNP (Syrian Social Nationalist Party). We didn't have any problem getting home that afternoon but not long afterwards I had to change schools. Many of the people we knew had to change schools, Christians and Muslims alike.

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[117] Twenty-seven Palestinians aboard a bus were murdered at a Phallangist checkpoint between Chiyah and Ein al-Rumaneh on 13 April 1975. The event is regarded as a main trigger of the Civil War (Fisk 2001, 78).

Zolo: Because you lived along the border of West and East Beirut? What was the conflict there like at first?

Lena: Yes, in Chiyah. And at first it was just men at the end of the street shooting at other men around the corner. If I wanted to cross, I could ask them to stop and they would. Civilians could cross. There wasn't any heavy weaponry at first. Mostly hunting rifles, maybe some handguns and simonovs. That's how it started. There would be fighting, then it would stop, then it would start again but then it would stop. People carried out their lives start-stop. But things deteriorated quickly, and checkpoints became places where people were murdered or kidnapped. Each faction had theirs. Palestinian militias like Fatah and Sta'teeka as well as Nasserists and SSNP came to be stationed on the first floor of the apartment building. That's how we first started to understand more about the war and the parties involved. There's a picture of me as a little girl behind a *doshka* (DShK)…Later on I remember bread, medicine and gasoline becoming scarce. I remember seeing people get hit by sniper fire from the balcony. On several occasions. There was this woman once, carrying her bread. I remember her running and getting hit. It really, truly petrified me. I went without my period for months afterward. Eventually the shelling became so frequent that we slept wearing shoes, in case we'd have to rush to the basement in the middle of the night. On occasion we would get stuck there for days, along with residents from those nearby buildings without basements as well. Periodically Nasserist, SSNP or OCAL combatants would come along with provisions for us. When we knew something was about to happen and could, we would leave for the village. Back

and forth to the Biqa’ we went, returning to Chiyah every time a cease-fire was announced. My siblings and I hated going there, we always used to cry beforehand. The Biqa’ was extremely underdeveloped. Your father lived in a dirt house. To the left of the entrance was a water cabinet. Stairs led to a second floor with a bedroom on one end and a cold-room at the other. The washroom was outside near the stable. Toufiq’s parents slept in the bedroom, mine in the living room and both sets of kids—all fourteen of us—on the roof. It was completely different from Beirut.

Toufiq: The Biqa’ is farmland. For example, we grew potatoes, lentils and chickpeas. We also owned a pair of cows along with some chickens and a mule. My father would pack up all the excess crops on that mule and walk it to the markets in Zahle. Things were very simple, yes. As a child my favourite pastime was threshing wheat. I took turns with my siblings riding a piece cardboard pulled by the mule through patches of it…You want to talk about recycling? We didn’t throw away a single thing. We even kept the patties from the stable for fire starting. It’s how we boiled water. I’m talking about the eighties here.

Zolo: How familiar were the families prior to 1975?

Toufiq: Not very familiar. I didn’t know what Beirut was before the war. I’d been to the market in Damascus a dozen times before I was nine, but I wasn’t aware of the existence of Beirut or Lena before 1975.

Zolo: How did events in Beirut come to your attention?

Toufiq: Well, since we didn't have a television, all of our news came from the newspaper. Terrifying images. First there was the massacre of Muslims in Karantina[118] and then a massacre of Christians in Damour[119] and so on and so forth. The war was punctuated by many massacres. Burnings, demolitions, killings, refugees...all these things. Beirut, this place with all these luxurious homes, was demolished and crawling with militants. It was near impossible to stay atop of the alliances, who was with who, and who was against who. Both the left and the right experienced a lot of infighting. I remember also the caravans of Muslims travelling from nearby, predominantly Christian villages and vice versa. Hundreds of cars, all the time. Before then Lebanon was much more mixed, even in the Biqa'**.** That's what I remember most from back then, the migrations. That and being stationed near Burj al-Barajneh during the Israeli invasion in 1982. God, what a miserable place…the roads were unpaved, there were no schools or hospitals…You see? The Lebanese government and its Western backers are responsible for the resistance. They are the ones who created the conditions requiring it.

Zolo: Why did you join the military?

Toufiq: Lack of opportunities. The Maronites have all the advantages in Lebanon when it comes to employment. I didn't even have the opportunity to study. For Shia to gain professional positions they need to have a big connection (*wasta)*.

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[118] On 18 January 1976 Danny Chamoun, son of former president and Maronite *zaim* Camille Chamoun, led his Tigers militia to the razing of the Palestinian camp in Karantina. An estimated 1500 refugees were murdered (Fisk 2001, 99).

[119] In retaliation for Karantina, the PLO attacked the Christian village of Damour on 20 January 1976, massacring over 500 civilians.

Zolo: What about the Israeli invasion? How did the military respond?

Toufiq: The only thing the Lebanese Army was in the position of doing was shepherding people into safe spaces. We didn't have the weapons to respond. There was nothing we could do, especially when it came to tanks and jets. As soon as the IDF ground advance had been confirmed I just got in my truck and picked up Lena, her siblings and parents. We started driving toward Chmstar but were hemmed in behind the advance until the PLO forced a partial withdrawal. The Israelis had bragged about being able to invade Lebanon with a marching band but they were surprised in Khalde. About thirty kilometers east of Beirut near Dahr al-Baidar, the road was littered with smouldering cars. The scene was terrible but otherwise we made it to Chmstar unscathed.

Zolo: Did the Biqa' remain safe throughout the war?

Toufiq: Things in the Biqa' remained peaceful until '89, when General Auon ordered raids on the Syrian outposts there. Around that time a bus full of school children near UNESCO was shelled. I decided then that Lebanon was beyond redemption. So, I asked my father for his opinion. He told me that if I was going to leave Lebanon, I should marry first.

Lena: Yes, and when my father vetoed Toufiq's proposal on account of his unemployment, he acted out by proposing to that girl from *beit* Husseini instead. The

engagement was off before long though and my father relented. We married in 1987, just before your uncle was martyred. By then my parents had begun building their own home in Chmstar. I remember looking out the window and seeing a car driving down the main road toward us. As it drew close, I noticed our neighbours from Beirut *beit* Sobhi inside. They also had a son named Yahya who was around the same age as my brother. I ran out to meet the car and noticed *um* Yahya crying. I asked what was wrong and she told me that Yahya had been martyred in Bourj al-Barajneh. For whatever reason I just assumed she meant *their* Yahya. I didn't really understand until my mother came outside. I think she was startled by the composition of the group and started yelling, *"Where is he, where is he?"* He was in the trunk…A few weeks later Mona came to pay her respects. It had been almost a decade since I'd last seen her. She told us about a *wasta* she had at the Italian consulate, and how she'd used it to arrange a visa for her sister. From there she was hoping to sneak into Switzerland.

Zolo: Can you remind me why Switzerland?

Toufiq: Apparently people were being granted status there. So, I asked her if she'd be willing to use her *wasta* for us as well. A week later she smuggled me into East Beirut, where the Italian consulate was. The best place to cross sides back then was through "the port, where, in a pragmatic triumph of commerce over hate, shooting was rare during the day. [We] rode down a twisting, rubble-strewn street, past the ruins of the once-luxurious Normandy Hotel. Soon [t]he hulks of crumbling buildings rose on either side of us, turning the road into a slender corridor…[Staying] close to a line of cargo containers and

away from the water's edge, where the snipers would have a better shot" we, with "the horn blaring to warn oncoming traffic, [sped] through a dark and narrow abandoned cargo shed. When [we] re-emerged, [we took] a 90-degree turn that put [us finally] in the clear."[120] Despite all this trouble she refused to accept compensation. From the army, obviously without intending to return, I then applied for a month's reprieve. We left for Milan as soon as the request had been granted.

Zolo: How did you get to Milan?

Lena: In a big Pullman bus, all the way through Homs, Idlib, Reyhanli, Adana, Ankara, Istanbul, Sofia, Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Padua. It took four days.

Toufiq: And the Central Railway was filled with Lebanese. Some had been living there for weeks, stranded after having spent all their money on tickets to Switzerland. I remember someone shouting at us: *"What brought you here you idiots? They're going to turn you around!"* But I wanted to try for myself. I had to see for myself. I looked at the departure boards and saw that there was a train to Lausanne, which I knew was in Switzerland because I remembered that the 1949 Conference (of the United Nations Conciliation Commission) for Palestine was held there.

Zolo: What happened at the border?

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[120] John Kifner. "Life Among the Ruins in Beirut." *New York Times*, December 6, 1981.

Lena: The official came aboard to check everyone's documents. At first we tried to play dumb, as though we couldn't understand him, but he insisted. When he made a gesture toward the door I began to cry and plead. I explained in broken French why I couldn't go back home. I told him about Yahya, how he had been killed. I remember the sympathetic expression on his face. He was handsome. I think he took pity on us because he was around our age. He raised his finger to his lips like this, as if to say, *"It's OK,"* and closed the cabin door behind him.

Zolo: Did you have any idea what you were going to do once you got to Lausanne?

Toufiq: We had no idea where we were going. But across the street from the station there was this McDonalds, and from its parking lot we could hear men singing Abdel Halim Hafeez. It took a while to register because it was so unexpected. We ran over to them. Apparently they rehearsed there every day with the intention of intercepting new arrivals. We stayed with one of them for the first few nights, if I remember correctly his name was Mustapha al-Kiki. He explained how to seek status and even helped fashion a more convincing claim. Having registered it with the authorities, we were referred to the Red Cross which finally placed us under the care of a sponsor named Madame Ducres. She was in her late sixties, was tall and thin, and had grey eyes. She lived on a street called Chemin des Cottages near the Ouchy on Lake Geneva. I got the sense that her neighbours resented her being a sponsor, but I didn't get the impression that she cared. She used to drink wine in the garden every day from four to eight, at which point she'd come up to

our rooms and turn off all the lights. She could be a bit patronizing— but she really loved your mother. Whatever Lena wanted to do was OK with Mdme Ducres.

Lena: She even allowed me to cook in the kitchen. I think I impressed her with my standard of cleanliness. I was "Madame Liban." Our bond became especially strong during my pregnancy. Toufiq was working at the steel mill so I relied on her for a great deal then. One morning I was in too much pain to respond to her call for breakfast. She came to check on me and I told her that I was bleeding. She rushed me to the hospital in her own car, with one hand on the steering wheel and the other on my stomach. The contractions were painful, and I cried out for my mom. But she told me not to worry, that she was my mom. She filled out all the paperwork on my behalf at the hospital and held my hand until Toufiq arrived. I gave birth the next day and she returned with flowers and gifts. When I brought you home, she'd even organized a large party for me. All her friends had been invited over…she was so excited to show you off. She continued to visit me after we had moved out into our own apartment, right up until we were deported. After the Taif Accords I returned with you to Lebanon and Toufiq tried to enter Germany with a counterfeit Italian passport sourced by an Algerian man we'd met in Lausanne.

Zolo: And you were arrested, correct?

Toufiq: Yes, I was held in custody for a few days before being turned in to the Swiss authorities who then delivered me to the airport. Lucky for me the Lebanese Army had recently pardoned its deserters. For a while I tried to find work but soon gave up. That's

when I met Antar, an accomplished smuggler. A good man really, just a child of war. He was just responding to the needs of those around him. He started by buying copies of visas/landed immigrant papers from people who had since become citizens. Eventually he became wanted by the authorities. Whenever he would get apprehended, he'd yell something like, "*See all those cultured people that say 'bonjour' and 'bonsoir'? I'm the one that gave them the chance to go out and get an education. You should thank me, not arrest me!*" I think he's in Roumieh Prison now.

Zolo: Why did you choose Canada?

Toufiq: The highest quality counterfeit he had was Canadian. It was very expensive. I caught a ferry to Cyprus and from there flew to Montreal. When I cleared customs at Pierre Eliot, I tore up my passport and declared myself a refugee. I was in Canada for about eight months before I received my landed and about a year before you and your mother arrived.

Lena: We picked up our visas in Damascus and from there flew to Toronto. Toufiq was waiting for us outside the gate. We stopped at a restaurant on our way to London—here, I have a photo.

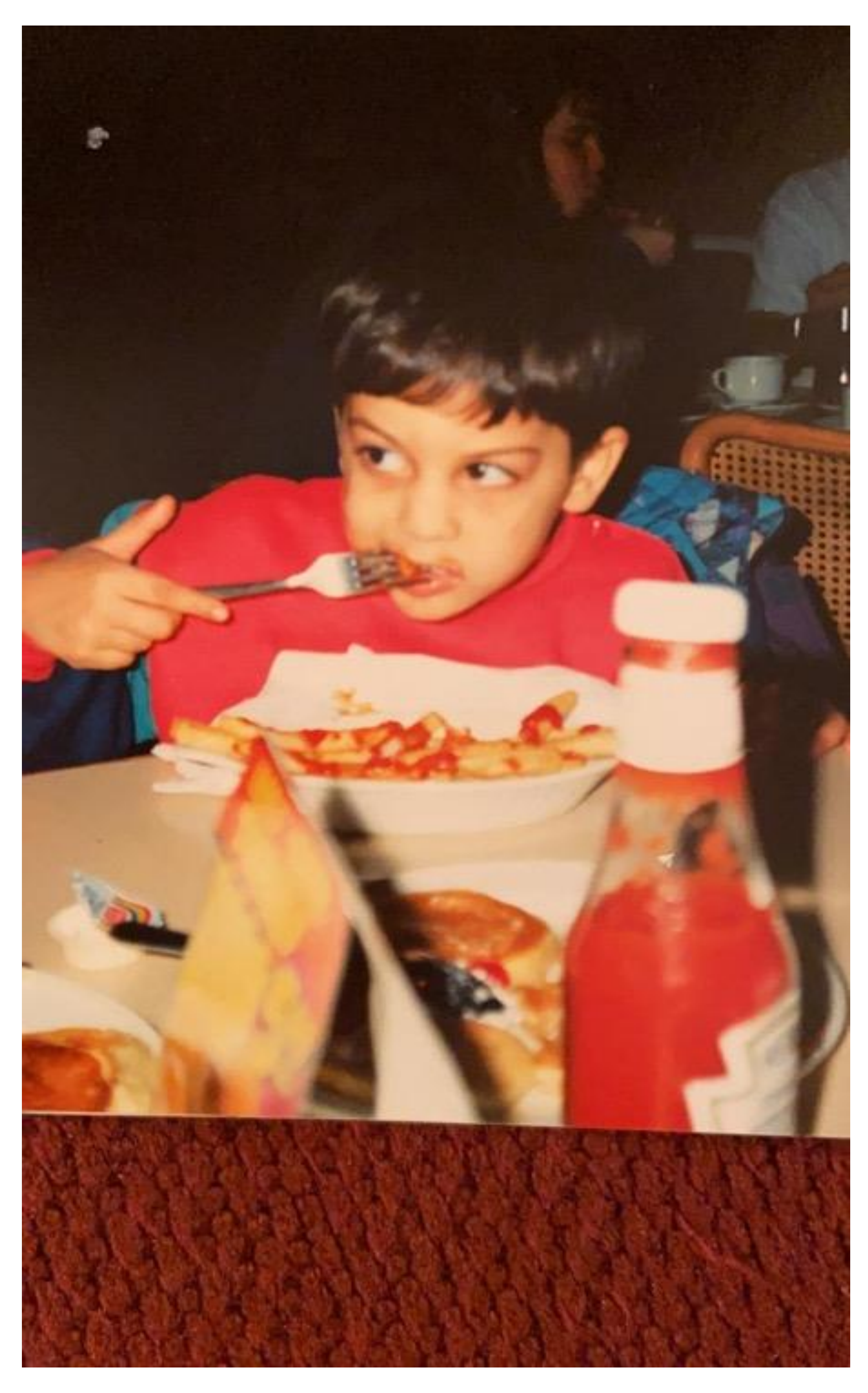


Figure 12: Zolo’s First Day in Canada
(Source: Personal library)

Zolo: What were your first impressions of Canada?

Lena: The first thing I said to Toufiq, "*Switzerland is much prettier*." But the environment here in White Oaks made the transition to Canada very comfortable. I love Lebanon and hope that I can return one day, I do, but I also consider myself Canadian. I will always defend Canada. I feel like it's my responsibility to do so. I owe Canada a great deal.

Zolo: After all these years do you still intend on returning to Lebanon?

Toufiq: On the one hand yes, but on the other things are worse now than they were back then. The conflict with Daesh is the worst the region has ever seen. How many suicide bombings have there been in the southern suburbs? Six? More? If Hizballah hadn't intervened in Syria, Daesh would have gotten to Lebanon. Even still, the influx of so many Syrian refugees has devastated the social infrastructure. The price of necessities like water is why Lebanon has a debt culture now. Most of the violence in Biqa' happening today is because of this debt. People lend money to either their own family or members of their tribes, acquaintances, etc. who then for whatever reason, and there are many, have no choice but to default on the loan. And since these loans are almost always informal authorities cannot enforce the terms of their agreement. So, there is violence—stabbings, shootings, whatever. This is a very serious problem. Every month things get much worse. The bills are very high, and the taxes are even higher. The people are all trending toward absolute poverty…

With his patience for transcription spent Zolo removed his headphones and swung his chair away from the computer screen. Instinctively, he raised his fingertips to his forehead. Pimple. On his way to a beginning-of-term barbeque hosted by the department he stopped in the washroom, leaned over the sink toward the mirror and released from the pustule its excess of sebum and dead skin.

A warm sunny evening in early September, Zolo decided to walk the ten kilometres to campus. Behind the Geography Building he found his chestnut tree in the far corner of the quad. With his back against it he took sips of tepid Nescafe and surveyed his surroundings. A new face emerged from a crowd in the centre. He observed intently as the stranger went around introducing himself to faculty. Something about the other man was offensive, his aura malevolent. Then suddenly their eyes met. To save face Zolo reached for his bag and the book inside, a piece on the uses and disadvantages of history written by the son of a 19th century Prussian preacher. Flipping to a random page, he began to read:

> The reality of the philistine[121] is stupefying, things do not change and this is a result of man's cowardly inability to enforce the demands of culture, of art, on himself …While professing to hate fanaticism and intolerance in any form, what they really hate[…] was the dominating genius and the tyranny of the real demands of culture…[the philistine] permitted everyone, himself included, to reflect, to research, to aestheticize, above all to compose poetry and music, to paint pictures, even to create entire philosophies: the sole proviso was that everything must remain as it was before, that nothing should at any price undermine the 'rational' and the 'real,' that is to say, the philistine. The latter, to be sure, is very partial to abandoning himself from time to time to the pleasant and daring extravagances of art and skeptical historiography and knows how to appreciate the charm of such forms of entertainment and distraction; but he sternly segregates the 'serious things of life'—that is to say profession, business, wife, and child—from its pleasures: and to the latter belongs more or less everything that has anything to do with culture…[122]

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[121] I recognize the problematic connotations of the word "philistine." Consequently, I have used the word epigone instead where possible.
[122] Nietzsche (2010, 10-11).

"*An ascetic type,"* he thought. Someone who on the opposite page admitted to setting "a trap for his emotions, for his most extreme love of power…so that it changes into the emotion of the most extreme humiliation, and his agitated soul is pulled to pieces by this contrast."[123] Peering over the hardcover, Zolo noticed that the man in rude health was walking toward him. So close that he could now make out his nametag. "Gabriel" took a seat at a picnic table just to the right of the tree, directly across from a pair of grads discussing their fieldwork. His hands looked sticky.

> **Gabriel:** Do you guys mind if I butt in on this conversation? I'm wondering if you might have any advice for me. I've been DMing this Shia Lebanese family on Instagram to see if they would be cool with hosting me while I work on an ethnography of their community. They live in the southern suburbs of Beirut but are originally from Bednayel, near the Roman ruins in Baalbek. The ruins? A second-century temple commissioned by Emperor Antoninus Pius for the Greek wine god Dionysus. Sixty-six meters long, thirty-five wide and thirty-one high. It's actually a part of a temple complex that includes temples for Jupiter and Venus too. They're among the best-preserved temple ruins in the world. UNESCO World Heritage sites. I'm pretty sure they were excavated by a German expedition between 1898-1903. Did you know it's now totally administered by Hizballah? Vendors actually sell their memorabilia outside the gates. Yeah, they're actually well-represented in the national parliament too. Not sure how fair elections are though. Anyways, the idea is to try and gain an understanding of the Shia Lebanese perspective, you know, given its significance as a factor in Middle-Eastern geo-politics

[123] Nietzsche (2008, 94).

today. I gather that as a people they experienced a sort of—if you'll excuse my Marxism—consciousness-raising during the Civil War. Yeah, distinguished Iranian cleric Musa al-Sadr, descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima, then led a movement against their economic plight and political marginalization. The military wing was known as the Lebanese Resistance Regiments, which in Arabic has the acronym AMAL, meaning hope. Originally trained by the PLO and funded by Libya, the Shia resistance effort gained serious momentum following the Islamic revolution of Iran. The Ayatollah proved a generous benefactor, so Sadr decided to stop purchasing arms from Libya. That's why Colonel Gaddafi disappeared him 40 years ago. It was in his absence that AMAL splintered and Hizballah was formed. Though the leftist influence on the Shia resistance has considerably faded since then, I still think there's a sort of liberation theology scenario brewing there that deserves some attention. Hizballah are famous in the Arab world for registering its only success against the IDF. In 2000, after 18 years of insurgency in the Southern Province. They gained a lot of credibility then, not just among Shia and other facets of Lebanon but around the Arabic speaking and Muslim worlds as well. Then in 2006 they conducted a cross-border raid, killing three Israeli soldiers and abducting two others. They were looking for ammunition to force a prisoner exchange but instead precipitated a thirty-four-day military conflict in which the Dahieh was pretty well demolished. They lost a bit of credibility afterward but the efficiency with which they rebuilt the Dahieh was itself a show of force. All the Shia villages and suburbs in Lebanon have public shrines devoted to Hizballah's martyrs. It's pretty eerie but on the other hand there's an enviable aspect of solidarity and community action to it all. I know, I know, I'm just being romantic. I have no right to be, really. Things really

are terrible in Lebanon. Did you know that it took forty-six rounds of presidential elections and over two years to replace their last president? Forty-six, mate**.** The country is totally divided and in constant political deadlock so now there's a rolling brown-out and the main landfill passed its expiration date. A ridge of garbage bags actually lines the banks of the river in Beirut for several kilometers. On top of that there are over one-and a-half million Syrian refugees there, with the vast majority living in shanty towns. That's over a fourth of the total population. The pressure on the economy and public infrastructure has been catastrophic really. So bad that the IMF predicts the nation is at risk of defaulting on its $83 billion public debt. That's the third highest in the world**.** The Minister of Economy even recently admitted to a *Financial Times* reporter that Lebanon's banks are almost entirely dependent on continuous inflows of foreign direct investments. Can you believe that? Oh, and since Hizballah entered the Syrian arena on the side of Bashar al-Assad the Dahieh and other Shia majority areas have been the target of ISIS-claimed suicide bombings. There was a massive blast only last week in Beirut that killed fifty. If anything, that sort of thing just strengthens the support of the locals for Hizballah's alliance with Damascus. Anyway, do you think it's really necessary for me to enrol in Arabic classes? Any chance I might be able to get away with only using English language sources?

By Gabriel's mealy précis **zolo** was thoroughly deflated. It ruthlessly disclosed to him, in a manner nothing else ever had before, his own transparency. It confronted him with his "sick and humiliating" condition, his vacillating "between exaggerated, bustling activity and

melancholy sluggishness: tired, lazy, [and] afraid of work."[124] Stunned he remained under his tree, watching on as the crowd around Gabriel grew larger and, hours later, dispersed again. Afterward at the stop for the 504 bus zolo wistfully traced with his finger the pattern of an eidetic image that had appeared over the patch of pavement at his feet, where its grooves had congealed into a purple pattern. As the shadow of another commuter walking impatiently around the streetlamp enclosed it, gusts of wind lofted the cries of a nearby child—*"Dad? Where are you?"*

Flashback: 1975[125]

He was dreaming. He knew that he was. But it was more lucid than any dream he'd ever had before. Time passed slowly and it was densely populated. There were at least a hundred other people with him, huddled in smaller groups on the freezing cold concrete of a basement floor. They spoke an unfamiliar language or, rather, a language he only half recognized. An eternity elapsed before the door atop the staircase opened and two rifle-toting boys descended toward the crowd carrying bread and water. Another boy only slightly younger approached the first two. He was handed a shoebox. With what looked like his twin sister he then catalogued the items inside: magnifying glass, scissors, tinfoil, plastic bag, marker and adhesive. Removing the lid from the shoe box, the two lined the inside with foil and turned it upside down. They cut holes out of both ends and glued the magnifying glass to one. As they waited for the adhesive to take the girl sliced the plastic bags into strips and drew on them with marker. The boy then rounded up a group of scared looking children. With him holding the box in a way so as to catch

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[124] Nietzsche (2016, 79-80).

[125] Families living along either side of Old Saida Rd., the sandbagged line of demarcation between East and West Beirut, endured the heavy bombings of 1975-7 from the basements of their apartment complex. As protection from sniper-fire extensive networks of first-floor tunnels were quickly developed in the neighbourhoods of Ein al-Rummaneh and Chiyah (Jureidini and Price 1979, iv).

the light seeping through cracks in the ceiling, his sister helped one of the smaller ones pull a strip of plastic through a slit at the top. A visibly tired Woody Woodpecker flashed on the wall, plodding down a long row of motels with disproportionately sized "No Vacancy" signs. Having found a room to rent from Wally Walrus, the increasingly outlandish effects of Woody's sonorous snoring drove the proprietor mad. The children contributed noise effects and laughed as Wally's subsequent attempts to silence Woody all backfired. In the final frame, with a sleeping Woody at last in the mercy of Wally, a woodpecker alarm clock concealed inside the briefcase on the nightstand went off.[126]

Dialogue Two: The Club

As the impulse to check was greatest in the morning zolo had taken to putting on a toque as soon as he woke up. Even still he kept his eyes glued to the sink while he brushed his teeth, the lights turned off. *"I can't pull away from the mirror,"* he explained to a psychiatrist at the University Hospital a week earlier. *"Even though I know that the discolouration isn't melanoma, that it's from a pimple I popped, I still can't stop myself from checking it. I jump back and forth between it and the other blemishes, moles and scars on my body. Every now and again, I catch a glimpse of myself, craning my neck and contorting my body into all these horrible shapes to reassure myself over the one or the other. It's brutal."* Dr. Arthur had urged him to begin attending his cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) group. The next session was scheduled for that evening but zolo hadn't yet made up his mind about attending. Downstairs he found his roommates already in the kitchen, Dauri sat at the table over a bowl of cereal and Mike with his head in the fridge.

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[126] Walt Disney (1957).

zolo: What's up?

Dauri: Mike is giving me a history lesson about Danzig and like East Prussia.

zolo: Oh yeah?

Mike: Yeah, it's all part of Poland now but basically the whole coast of the Baltic Sea wasn't traditionally. Obviously, there were Polish people there, of course there was a lot of mixing, but there were a lot of Germans too. That was Prussia. It was after WWII that Poland gained all that territory. All the Germans were deported by the Soviets. But during the Renaissance Poland-Lithuania was this massive state and they were a great power. They fought a lot of wars with Sweden, which was another great power at the time. Poland-Lithuania, Sweden and Russia were top dogs. But Sweden really won the biggest out of the Thirty Years' War. They really capitalized on that shit and were basically the owners of the Baltic Sea for a while. By the time the 1800s came along, though, it was Russia that was the greatest power and it retained stewardship of the area until the nineteenth century. But yeah, Poland-Lithuania is an interesting one. It came about because of the Teutonic order, because of settlement coming out of Germany along the Baltic Sea. There's not a lot of historical evidence to say that Gdansk was genocide, but I think we know by now that genocide was very commonly employed by early states. Mesopotamia was fucking genocide after genocide. You just conquered these people, are you going to keep them alive? No, you're going to kill them, or as many as you need to, and you're going to kill their gods, tear down their statues take them back to your capital

and wear them as trophies. That's how you subjugate a people...When I was in high school I was really blown away when I was reading about the Middle Ages and how much indiscriminate killing was going on. And now we cut ahead to the present and we have this concept of genocide but that's just how business was done basically until the Romantic period...The Assyrian King says in his chronicle, whoever the Assyrian King may be, *"Yes I've conquered these people and I've cut their King's balls off and made his whole family watch and then I skinned them all before in turn murdering the civilians. And that's how powerful I am."* And that's his narrative in like 700BC. The reason why Cyrus the Great, who in the West gets outshone by Alexander the Great, was so great to his contemporaries like Herodotus is because he came up with this idea that maybe we should tolerate subjugated people.[127] It worked because historically everyone was so used to getting slaughtered. And then this guy said, *"No, the King can keep his balls and his life and he can be one of my advisors and the people can keep their own traditions and religion, they can speak their own languages and we'll issue multilingual state decrees!"* That was the Persian Empire and it was unique. Again, the Assyrians were known for having killed everybody and that was the status quo...Mesopotamia was a polytheistic society, sure, but each state had their own patron God and they refused to tolerate other patron gods. That's the history of man, that's the history of civilization and its genesis. It's genocide. And so, of course, the Teutonic order was slaughtering who they considered heathens along the Baltic Sea. Catholic Poland at first would have been sympathetic with the crusaders, but eventually the Teutonic Knights overstepped their bounds. They pushed Poland to join forces with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a state

[127] See Lamb (1960).

that was Pagan up until then. Their confederation becomes one big superpower and does away with the Teutonic order. I mean, some of the Teutonic holdings hold out and later on you have the Hohenzollern family which establishes the Kingdom of Prussia out of those holdings but, yeah.

Laconically, Dauri often described Mike as his "*answer to Michelangelo's David.*" zolo met the two of them at one of their Rhizoma events, officially a *"participatory soundscape driven by the pulse of cumbia and a passion for multimedia experimentation."* From the bar that night he had taken note of the care and duty with which Mike carried Dauri's CDJs onto the stage and thought against their dynamic, "*Is this dude a sycophant or what?"* A bit perhaps but as zolo later found out for himself, Dauri was unusually persuasive. An immigrant from Mexico City, the Sephardic Jew was svelte with black hair, disproportionately large extremities and a painfully deliberate cadence. In the kitchen that morning zolo remembered some music he had been meaning to share with his roommates. He walked over to the wood encased speaker at the entrance of the adjacent living room and plugged his phone in. *"Before I forget I wanted you guys to hear a song that you might want to consider for the next event."* Dauri listened intently before speaking.

Dauri: Yeah this is very crazy...Yeaaah! You hear that? There was an in-between that you barely noticed and then this other sound came in. That in-between they do really, really well. It's like a tiny seizure...so crazily crafted. Seamless but so powerful at the same time. They are using it very, very forcefully. And it's nothing but a half-second but that's why this music is great. Yeah, its creative and crazy but you can kinda dance to the

music at the same time. It creates tension very well. I'm seeing rainbows bro, hahahaha. Yes**…**very, very interesting. They're like, really like….they choose their things and their influences and they're very distinguished. Interesting mix of sounds and mixes...yeah, there's so much in the pool that you cannot include it all but they have a very interesting mix of sounds. I'm gonna use this shit because it has the right frequencies. It's heavy. This is what, ideally, we want everyone to be dancing to. It has actual substance. This type of music is really good because it's inclusive for a lot of people at the same time. Like sometimes it gets very heavy metal and maybe your metal people and whatever are going to enjoy that part. It's powerful music. Probably these guys are play a lot right now. Like, are these guys big? This shit is like...yeah man. They're probably doing well.

zolo: Have you chosen a theme for the next Rhizoma?

Dauri: Yeah, that crazy film. You saw it, no? Wim Wender's (1987) *Wings of Desires*? Man, that film…we gotta watch it together. It's really like...you know, when I watch that film I can explain to anyone why it is that there is no reason to watch any other type of films but those types. It's a film that would really, really allow you to justify that instead of watching any fucking shit you can just watch that film a million times and just not watch anything else. It's one of those films...you can't convince me of watching anything, anything, anything, anything else because you are what you consume and that film is…it's crazy. It's a masterpiece...I see it as an act of memory where you can clearly see that like, perhaps the filmmaker as storyteller does actually have a responsibility and there is a task for the filmmaker. And you may want to give that task to the filmmaker

and film in general. And if you watch any film and it does not fulfil that task then you can just totally discard those films. It's just massive...I was like, you know, tears were coming out of my eyes. It was just because like the film is just like...man like, a lot of nostalgia for the time I spent studying the film in Mexico and spending a lot of time with the images and shit like that and working with them. But it's also just like, fuck man, there's figures in that film that like we no longer have access to. It's pre-Potsdamer Platz, this guy makes the film right before the fall of the wall, so it's a piece of like fucking memory. He made it probably on purpose at that time. And it seems like the film is very much like, I don't know if you've ever read Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" and all of that, but it feels like a fucking redeeming film.[128] You know, Wim Wenders is German and there's all of this history and there's this collective, like massive guilt, shame, everything...all these issues, and it seems that it is through that film that this guy wants to redeem that in the viewer, which is one of the nice things about history, that when you re-write history you can do that. Or you can also fuck it up, like Hollywood does. Hollywood is really, really good at re-writing history and changing it completely and that was the whole project. There's evidence, there's telegrams, like Washington telegrams, before Hollywood became a thing of how they like just wanted to fund this project because film had this capacity…But anyway, yeah, I'm gonna do a lot of things with this film…just gonna be like probably a lot of chances for people to write stuff, for people to paint and think and do stuff.

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[128] In *Thesis III* Benjamin (1968, 254) writes, "A chronicler who recited events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history. To be sure, only a redeemed mankind receives the fullness of its past—which is to say, only for a redeemed mankind has its past become citable in all its moments." For more on Benjamin's concept of redemptive history see Wolin (1982) and Handelman (1991).

zolo: Are you planning on DJing? A new mix or maybe something live?

Dauri: You know something? I even thought in these days, just because of necessity, I've even thought about selling my turntables. Because I know how to play them…I tried out of curiosity because I thought it was very difficult and shit like that. But after playing the drums there's a logic to the turntable, like there's no fucking secret to that. And like, if I wanna go and buy vinyls and play vinyls in a place where I get invited to a party, I can just go and play with the vinyls that are there. I don't need to have them, I don't need to practice with them, it's just not something that I need. And on top of that it's just really like, I grab the vinyls and the turntable and all of the stuff like that because I was like, ok I really need to prove to myself and, therefore, to whoever is gonna be coming to my events, that I'm a real guy who really, really, really knows this medium, and really, really knows how to perform but that just doesn't make any fucking difference. So like...yeah I can keep buying vinyls and I could just have a record player that's cheaper than those turntables and like it's there in my house...I'll just like, whenever I have the chance to play with vinyls, if the place has vinyls, I'll just bring some vinyls and that's it...But that really doesn't fulfill me anymore. I don't know, the DJ thing was maybe cool in Mexico because in Mexico there were not a lot of people doing that and playing that kind of music. It worked, it delivered something, and it did have function and it was forceful...but here it's so saturated. Really, my primary concern with the event will be limiting the impact of Gizelle's dad.

Mike: Oh God, he was absolutely insufferable last time.

Dauri: You didn't even see the worst part. I don't know when you left but I think he killed the night because he needs so much attention. He had to make sure everyone at the event knew he knew us and that he was involved. The guy is the focus of attention, he needs to be. This is the thing: if he wasn't Gizelle's dad I wouldn't put up with him. At first when you meet him you say, *"Okay…this guy,"* but then he starts unfolding, and he's so openly devastated and destroyed that slowly, slowly you'll see more and more until it gets to the point where I'm at. When we go out to eat no one says anything, we all sit in silence and wait for him to finish. This guy calls Gizelle seven times a day…he has that creditor debtor mentality. He brought her into the world, so she apparently owes him everything. I am convinced her relationship to him is at the root of her anxiety attacks.

zolo: I'm sorry to hear they're still an issue for her.

Dauri: She actually just had another...it's just those anxiety attacks are like, are weird because if you're around it's very difficult for you who is quote unquote "not having the panic attack" to understand that that's what's happening. And all of a sudden you are in the environment of that attack...you're in because this other person is so in that even if you're quiet and chill and trying to keep your shit together, you're in. You're not going to be able to chill this person out unless you make them go to sleep with a pill that's like an emergency exit. And I tried...but she was being really, really negative, really weird and everything was really bad. On Friday she wanted to leave the city, she wanted to go to

Prince Edward County, but I was like *“We can’t leave the city, I have to play a show tomorrow so let’s just go to Bush Park.”* The place was amazing, it was a great experience and a trek and stuff, but she didn’t have a good time, it was not OK for her and the park was not enough of a park. Then we went to go eat at an Indian restaurant somewhere far in the East End that someone had recommended as a great place...we went there and it was really heavy and she didn’t like it and was feeling like shit and then I was like *“Try to chill out,”* but she was feeling like shit and the place was “really bad.” That’s the thing, that’s where the fucking trauma is...she evaluates herself based on a lot of imagery that may not be present now in her life but was at some point. Whatever bullshit, whatever idealizations she has. That’s why I told her, let’s read *Phaedo* because that’s where the answer is. But she didn’t want to have that conversation while reading *Phaedo*. That was the issue, she never wanted to discover that her problem is so easy. I told her, you just hurt yourself all the time...But I think that like, unconsciously, I’m just getting ready and it’s terrible but I’m planning how the departure is gonna be. And how am I gonna make it the least harmful. I think that the one thing is, *“Well, I can’t go to Vancouver. I just don’t wanna go to Vancouver.”*

Mike: She’s still talking about going to Vancouver?

Dauri: Yes, and I think that’s going to be the thing. It hurts but that’s gonna be the thing and I think that as soon as she’s out of my life slowly, slowly shit’s just gonna get better. These times are tough because I’m almost at the point of going my own way but everything that is going on with her makes me feel really unstable. I was thinking “*I have*

three more years of visa, I have this and that" but I just don't feel safe with her. Her attitude of like "*I have to travel and I have to go…"* I'm just like so chill. And I wanna be fine and I just have no problems...I don't need to make my life more complicated. That's what I keep telling my mom on the phone. Like I just don't want to make my life more complicated. It's already too complicated...I spend so much money with Gizelle and my diabetes is more or less fine but it would be better without her because I would eat every day the same thing...the same thing in the morning...the same thing in the afternoon and the same thing at night. That would allow me to control myself way better...But she needs things to always be different, and that's what she's like. And I know that other people are not like that because I lived with Alin before.

zolo: How often do you still think about Alin?

Dauri: Ever since we broke up. I knew that, yeah, I would like other people and stuff but I just can't forget about myself. Because if I do that, I'm gonna lose it...and if you just don't forget about yourself, you'll be fine no matter who leaves. And yeah, my relationship with Alin was bigger, like straight up. I think I lost much more there, because there was a lot more that was built...consciously. The sad truth is that when I bring music to Gizelle that I like, she's open to those and she's open to things but at the end of the day it's just the desire of the other that needs to be satisfied. Like we did a song together and it was just me and her and I was like, "*Yeah let's keep it like this because it sounds obscured and it sounds like it's missing something"* and that, for me, today, is what works musically. If you wanna do something that's revolutionary and show it to people

and be like "*this is unique*," then let's just do something that feels like it's missing something.

zolo: What did it sound like?

Dauri: It was just percussion and voice but then she had to add the harmonies because a lot of people told us, *"This isn't enough."* And that's the thing…there's no self. We technically all have no self, it's not "*us"* or "*ours*," but with her it's at its utmost potential for alienation. I can't even talk to her about the play that I did, the Beckett or anything, because she is not "*I*." She is just a product of her environment and that's the whole big and easy criticism but she's that. That's what is tricky. Alin and I used to be similar to that but we practiced this thing, which is that "*Ok I am not going to tell you what or who to be*," and when a bunch of irrational weird stuff would come out we would identify that in each other. But that's the problem. Your image that you are following here in Canada is like now a mirror image of yourself. That's what you're wanting to do. You're not producing it but that's the image. In other places it's an image of things, you know memories, like things that people share, collective sentiments...That's the whole point of continuing history and everything. But with Gizelle I cannot fulfil my desire to continue living and continuing to do history. That's the project...that's my thing. It's still possible. It could be. I refuse to be unaffected and closed. That's the kind of subject that this state produces. Closed subjects. Closed. Individuals of closure. Regardless of their activities being very radical, very artistic, whatever it is, it's just closure. Closed. Locked! Sealed! Sealed individuals, I think that that's the thing. And that's the state for Deleuze and

Guattari, like that enclosure...you are enclosed, you are not open. You don't affect and you don't get affection because you're within the state, within the boundaries of the state. You are a mini-state yourself with its own bubble of protection. It's very real and it makes immigrating to Canada very difficult because, man, if you don't open yourself you're fucked! Having the qualities of the state will make you really unhappy. But yeah, repression here is like immediate, so immediate that there is no consciousness, there is no memory. Because even before it happens, you already got it out, you know? You don't wait for people to come to your house to tie you up, steal shit and leave. Repression. No memory.

zolo: You've never provided the details of that incident. It must have been crazy traumatic.

Dauri: I was coming into the garage when they came from around the house, I was opening the door. We didn't have an electric door, so I got out of the car to open it and they came in behind me. They tied us up, me, my sister and my parents. The three of them were freaking but like for me I just felt like they were taking shit, so I was pretty chilled and just trying to help. But man, like my mom was I think the most affected. After we got robbed…she can't even drive the car anymore because her, like, that post-traumatic stress disorder is so crazy. And since the situation in the country generally is really, really bad, she's always traumatized.

Mike: What's the deal with the gangs in Mexico?

Dauri: They're causing a lot of internal displacement. People are getting out of smaller towns and places because you can't fucking stay. The drug lords are building their own settlements and shit like that so, it's insane. You can't believe it until you actually see it. I've met a lot of people who came from settlements like that they were like *"Yeah we're leaving, and our family is leaving and the ones that are not are just dead already."* That's what's crazy. It's real and it's happening. Here in North America a lot of people are studying that, and they make it a TV show and that's how you experience it here. But it's real. Wild, wild situation. No one that I know has been killed yet but it feels as though it can happen anytime. During my last trip to Mexico I saw people walking into traffic and forcing their way into cars with guns. Like I'd had heard of that and seen videos of that but now my dad sees that all the time. They only drive older, less expensive cars. I even told my mom that I didn't think it was a good idea, you know, having those random security guards, which is just a random person without a job given like a stick. Those guys are not going to do anything, plus they're the guys who see everything. Like, they're there. And they're probably not making a lot of money so like you can come in and just make a deal and that's it. And anyways when we got robbed, I was like always crossing my fingers being like, "*I hope that no one knows because if the cops show up and something happens, we're screwed."* You wanna let them do their thing and like take whatever the fuck they wanna take and then they can just, you know, peace out. But like, when you start putting more people in, the infrastructure makes it more for like a pretty bloody, bloody encounter when it used to be more like, these guys, you know, they see you coming into your house, they get the gun out and come in with

you and take the shit and that's it. But now it's like... crazy shit. But I guess it's like probably similar to the Middle East. Like, you do kind of live with fear but at the same time you have to live your fucking life and you have to do your shit. And people are not thinking about it.

Dauri was weird and intense but in admirable ways. A man of few airs, decisive. Trustworthy. Mike was much the same, though decidedly more given to his death-drive. This unfortunately included lengthy depressive episodes. His relative psychic misfortunes were attributed by Mike to his family's relocation from London to Peterborough when he was 12, a move that entailed a change from private to public school. *"My late exposure to drugs and sex really stunted me emotionally."* For years the three of them had occupied the same two floors of a dilapidated Victorian house with eerily muraled halls. More club than home, a venue for galleries, performances, séances, unregistered magnet therapy and the worship of Bacchus. Appreciating that good times never last, his experiences there were something zolo did his best to savour. For they supplied the ideal "framework for [his] quest for education,"[129] for enrichment and growth. While washing up after breakfast zolo felt sufficiently empowered to do what Dr. Arthur had asked and practice limiting himself to a single look at the discolouration. As he slowly peeled off his toque things became "warmer around him again, yellower, as it were."[130] Nothing there. It was gone.

Several salubrious hours of work on his dissertation followed for zolo. With a clarity he hadn't known for a fortnight he typed well into the evening, stopping only once to respond to a

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[129] Nietzsche (2016, 12).
[130] Nietzsche (2008, 7).

text from David. A close friend from undergrad, he wanted to know if zolo was free for dinner at Queen Momos. He considered declining the invitation to continue building on his head of steam before resolving that doing so would be against the spirit of the day. David was at a table near the front of the Tibetan restaurant. The gifted son of a renowned psychiatrist, he was evidently in the mood to reminisce.

David: Did I ever tell you about that guy at Trinity College during my exchange year? The Arabic major?

zolo: You can major in Arabic at Trinity?

David: Oh yeah, there are so many people majoring in Arabic there. The biggest department is International Relations and its focus is security studies. This guy had spent three years majoring in Arabic because he "wanted to work in Iran." I was like, *"you know they speak Farsi there, right?"* I kid you not. In his third year.

zolo: Did he spontaneously combust?

David: No, but he did look quite sad. But yeah, Trinity has a huge Arab Gulf connection. There are actually a number of Saudi princes studying there. Big security studies school as I mentioned, and an Arabic language department too…there's even an entire school of Middle Eastern and Central Asian Studies. Yeah, Trinity is really into this in a very

orientalist way…like, they're very critical of orientalism but the fact that it exists is like…you know, it had a very critical edge but it's still like, what the fuck?

zolo: Were many of the professors in these programs actually from the Middle East or Central Asia?

David: Actually, I learned International Law from an Australian-Palestinian woman. She taught it from a postcolonial perspective. It's, actually, largely what got me into a lot of the political theory. Because I took this course and she would just not take *"I'm white"* as an answer. She really was just teaching us that International Law is a horrible thing, and the only way to understand it is to understand the history of colonialism and how the exportation of the state as an entity was the worst thing that happened to the world. And that was the lens through which I learned International Law. And that's how I ended up in law school. I remember it was one of the first times that I was confronted by someone who was teaching a course and teaching us to be opposed to the policies of the state of Israel. And never in Canada would somebody teach you that. And it was shocking because, it was like, "*Well, that may be racist*." There are a lot of Americans at Trinity College and they were like, "*Oh, my god you can't say that…what if there was a role reversal?"*

zolo: How did she make her point?

David: It was interesting because we read the International Court of Justice decision on—it's a reference opinion, an advisory opinion asked for by the General Assembly of the UN—on the legality of building a wall on occupied Palestinian territory. I recommend you read it. I really recommend you read the decision and see what a legal analysis of the occupation looks like. It was interesting to me because, you know, if you set up the reference terms as the "legality of building a wall in occupied territory," you've already answered your question because you've defined it as occupied. I found it very jarring to be told by the biggest court in the world that Israel was doing something illegal and inhuman in theory. At the time I thought "*Well, this is so biased.*" But never since then has that professor seemed so interesting. The more I settle into my job at the firm the more I miss that type of interaction. And especially the type of work I put into my honours thesis that year.

zolo: Remind me again, what was your thesis about?

David: Oh, it was about Foucault being between Heidegger and Deleuze. At least the early Heidegger who in many ways remained within the Kantian tradition of critique.[131] Of trying to figure out, you know, what are the fundamental conditions of being. Trying to know things for certain. And Deleuze not giving a fuck about that. Like, Deleuze says, *"OK, I'm going to tell you the truth…I don't care whether it's the truth or not—I'm just*

[131] For a comprehensive discussion of Kant's influence on Heidegger see Sheehan (2014, xi-xvi).

going to assert it because why not?"[132] I always read Foucault as struggling in ambiguity over these two things. What he's trying to say, what I've read him as saying, is *"It's not Heidegger, but we can't ever know for certain it's not Heidegger because of Heidegger."* In other words, *"We shouldn't,"* I'm speaking as Foucault, *"we shouldn't write searching for the absolute, searching for the ground of things and indeed the pursuit of the groundless-ground, this whole activity of asking after the ground which leads Heidegger to this theory of the groundless-ground, is something that I don't want to pursue. But I can never know for certain whether I can get away from this pursuit of the groundless-ground, precisely because of Heidegger's critique of our finitude; I'm limited in what I can know, I'm limited in whether I know if I can get away from this theory obsessed with finitude."* Foucault's caught in this ambiguity of "*It's not this, but also, I can't know for certain because of this*." He's stuck in this position that I always read as…you only get in that position, and Deleuze wasn't I felt, because you take this stuff very seriously. This is just my reading of it. Foucault's trying to say "*Maybe we can escape finitude*," but because he's thinking within the lens of finitude it can only ever be a maybe.

zolo: What is it about the lens of finitude that captured Foucault?

David: Some of it is, you know, this problem of not being able to speak in any position for certain. Much of his earliest works seemed to almost have this element of

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[132] This characteristic attitude of Deleuze is evident, for example, in his treatment of Nietzsche in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (2006). As Michael Hardt (xii) explains in the introduction: "Deleuze approaches each philosopher and the entire philosophical tradition selectively, taking what he wants and ignoring the rest."

"structuralism"…as if it was possible to speak outside of your own perspective, from a bird's eye view. Many of his earlier books were described in that manner, as having assumed that point of view—*Madness and Civilization* (1961)[133] and *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963)[134] being the two main ones. Already in the *Order of Things* (1966),[135] he's, you know…he's thinking of thought. And then in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), he's trying to write a methodology to explain what he was trying to do in the *Order of Things*. He sits down and writes another book to explain what the hell was the premise, not even the content but just the premise, of the previous book he had written, and really struggled.[136] *The Archeology of Knowledge* is not a particularly coherent or clear book, but it's the book I found great inspiration in.

zolo: I can't say I'm familiar with it.

David: Basically, it's all about what he describes as "positivity."[137] As in…it's about things that have been posited, it's about things that exist in the world from a perspective and in a situation which we already are and, in that way, are very finite. It's about this whole question of "*Well, if I'm telling you this history, and if I'm telling you this history as if I was out of time, I'm telling you this history as if I was out of time from this*

[133] For example, see the discussion beginning with "It has doubtless been essential to Western culture to link, as it has done, its perception of madness to the iconographic forms of the relation of man to beast…" (Foucault 1961 [1988], 101).
[134] For example, see the discussion beginning with "Thus armed, the medical gaze embraces more than is said by the word 'gaze' alone. It contains within a single structure different sensorial fields…" (Foucault 1963 [1994], 164).
[135] For example, see the discussion on the limits of representation from pp. 235-271.
[136] Nowhere is this struggle more evident than in the conclusion, a bizarre third-person monologue from Foucault (1969 [1972], 199) regarding his "great pains to dissociate [him]self from 'structuralism.'"
[137] For example, see pp. 112, 122, 125, 135, 155, 168-171.

perspective in time and so telling you this history out of time from this perspective in time must be serving some purpose in time, and so like I've been telling you about these timeless things but telling you about timeless things is always caught up within this timed process…" and, just, I don't know. Reading *The Archeology of Knowledge*, I got the sense that he's frantic about these things. Afterwards he quit writing histories and began writing genealogies. His later work is very conscious about, you know, *"What is the act of writing?"* Deliberately constructing a history that's not claiming to be a true history, he sometimes referred to it as a history of the present. Whereas a historian will often talk about the way in which, you know, the reading of the past is affected by your cares and concerns for the present Foucault was saying, *"I'm writing history for the purposes of describing the present…I don't care about anything but the concerns of the present."* In that sense it doesn't claim to be true…it doesn't claim to have this reference corresponding to the "real" way in which history progressed. Um…but it also does. But that's the ambiguity and that's precisely what's going on with Foucault. He's ambiguous. I think he's really struggling with dualism in that sense, he's like "*It has to be one or the other but it's also both*."[138]

zolo: What makes you think he felt it needed to be the one or the other?

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[138] I find evidence of this ambiguity in statements such as: "I recognize the value of [structuralism's] insights of course: when it is a question of analysing a language, mythologies, folk-tales, poems, dreams, works of literature, even films perhaps…And despite a number of reservations that I had at the beginning, I now have no difficulty in accepting that man's languages, his unconscious, and his imagination are governed by laws of structure. But what I absolutely cannot accept is what you are doing: I cannot accept that one can analyse scientific discourses in their succession without referring them to something like a constituent activity, without recognizing even in their hesitations the opening of an original project or a fundamental teleology, without discovering the profound continuity that links them, and leads them to the point at which we can grasp them" (Foucault 1969 [1972], 201; see also pp.11, 199-201, 203-4, 234).

David: He just uses very dualistic metaphors. Which is a French thing. It's just...any tradition that holds Descartes up on a pedestal is going to think that way. Whereas a tradition that holds Kant up to a pedestal is going to think slightly differently because Kant wouldn't think in quite the same dichotomies. Kant also thought in dichotomies but his were more integrated. So, take for example Kant's theory of law.[139] There was a dichotomy between positive and natural law and Kant was a natural law theorist. He said, *"Look, these are the conditions for the possibility of law. Law is law, here is what law naturally is."* But law can only be law when it is posited as such. When it is made to be law by a state. And in much of Kant's writing on law he's saying, *"Look, in most states the law doesn't line up with the natural law."* He's not saying that there is a rigid dichotomy between that which is posited and that which is natural, or that which is natural is the only thing that there is, or that people who say that it is posited are wrong. No, he's saying that the natural gets to actualize itself through positivity. It's the dialectic.

zolo: Can you expand on that example?

David: So, Aristotle's metaphysics, so far as I remember at least, is all about the potential and the actual.[140] Form actualizes potential in substance. The highest good is the potential. Substance is the material, it's the world. Each substantiation of chair fulfills the

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[139] See for example Watkins (2019, 11-29).
[140] See for example Kirby (2008, 1-8).

potential of "chairness." Chairness fulfills itself—is actualized—through its instantiation, but the value is "chairness" and it's more valuable than any chair. Goodness is more valuable than instances of good. These are ideals. Like very similar to Plato in that way. But the thing with Aristotle, because he's so concerned with the concrete world, is that you run into these situations where there's the potential for a medium. For ideals to be actualized they have to go through some medium that creates the condition for the possibility of actualization. And Kant in many ways is playing up on this. He's saying, *"OK, natural law exists in the abstract and in pure form. But aspects of law can only exist once actualized. We can have the right conception of law, but it won't actually materialize unless we have certain material conditions. So, this conceptual way that it should be metaphysically can only actually be what it's meant to be metaphysically, we know conceptually that it is meant to be, if certain material conditions are in place."* That is more or less a dialectic theory, because it says "*Look the thesis is idealism, the antithesis is material reality and the synthesis is the actualization of the ideal in material reality."* That is what Aristotle is saying, what Kant is saying, and what Hegel will say.

zolo: Let's go back to Aristotle. I haven't come across this interpretation of him you're giving to me.

David: Yes**,** I read Aristotle in a particular way that most people disagree with. Most people disagree with my reading of everyone because I'm mostly reading myself into everyone and that's totally fine with me because I totally side with Deleuze on that. I don't care if I'm actually reading David. That's fine. That's why I set out to read

Aristotle in the first place. But to answer your question, Aristotle's got this fascinating social contract. He talks about the situation of people on their own, the fact that people enter into a community and political communities…these are separate things. That's in the *Politics*, in the first books, but this comes after he's already talked in the *Ethics* about friendship.[141] In some ways it seems, reading these two things together, that people on their own as individuals don't have the potential for social good. It almost seems to me that Aristotle draws a distinction between the individual good, the individual actualizing himself, and the good society that actualizes itself. The good society, good politics, the good life in that sense is a higher good than the individual's good life. The individual has on their own, in the statue of nature, the potential to be a good person. But they don't have the potential to be a good community because they're not a community. So you need the material fact of being in a good community in order to set the possibility of being in a good community, but then Aristotle says, "You need to be in a community, you need to be aspiring toward a good community in order to ever actualize yourself as a good person." So, you need the potential of good community to act as an intermediary between individual potential and individual actuality. You have this weird relationship where you basically have individual potential, the material fact of the possibility of community, so community potential, which then allows for the potential of individual actualization which is part of the process of community actualization. Once you see it that way, it's already a very dialectical understanding of politics, of the way that the good works. You know, so you said something to me a while back at my parent's place while we were having dinner…it was something along these lines of "*How does the*

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[141] See for example Von Heyking (2016, 3-35).

individual's good life relate to the societal good life?" And I said, *"I strongly believe that societal good life comes first or you can't have the individual without it and it's a long explanation that I can't give right now."* Well, that's my explanation. It's this weird Aristotelian thing.

zolo: Is the dialectic all there is?

David: It's not in any sense that it's describing how things actually work, but it's a useful way of thinking about the concepts that seems to have some sort of importance, in the sense that it says "*Whenever you try to draw a dichotomy between the individual and society or talk about individual goods and societal goods in a way that divorces the two or sees them as separate you seem to be missing the point."* You're always being-in-a-situation. This isn't any different than the existential thought that comes from this. And, again, that's what I read Foucault to be struggling with "Y*eah it seems like existentialism is right about that, but I don't wanna be Sartre."* This is what Foucault keeps saying, *"I don't wanna be him. I wanna do something different. Please tell me this isn't all there is."* But when you start from that lens you can't say definitively this isn't all there is, all you can say is, *"This isn't all there is, but I can never know for certain this isn't all there is because I've already accepted as a premise that I can't know things for certain. Except I don't know whether I can know things for certain because I accepted as a premise that I can't know things for certain…"* and then your head explodes. Or you lose patience. Whichever comes first.

zolo: That's so interesting. I can't pretend to have understood everything you've said.

David: A lot of this comes from an essay Foucault (1977) wrote on Kant called *What is Enlightenment*. In it he explains that, and this is Foucault sort of doing a Deleuzian thing by reading Foucault to Kant, *"There are two things Kant is saying. He's saying that Enlightenment is a project of critique and that it is also a historical movement in which we're concerned with critique. On the one hand he's saying the Enlightenment is getting at absolute truths and on the other hand he's saying it is a historical and highly contingent period during which we're concerned with absolute truths."* [142] Again, I obviously have read a lot of myself into this. In particular this sort of ongoing conflict I've had with my dad. He's a Heideggerian. He believes firmly in fundamental ontology and I've always wanted to rebel against that. And yet I'm so steeped in that tradition that I only know how to do so from the perspective of it. In that way Sartre was the dad of a generation of Frenchmen. And whereas a lot of Foucault's peers were able to snub it and say, *"Well fuck it, we'll do this other structuralist or Marxian thing Foucault was too concerned with what was right."* He said, *"Look it's obviously not true, strictly speaking, to claim a structuralist truth because there's an obvious contradiction there—you're claiming to speak from a position of neutrality, but we've got the main body of the work telling us that that's not the case."* I think that Foucault was very much struggling with being a very good intellectual, being a very disciplined academic, being very concerned with knowing the truth of these matters, being very concerned with the traditional

[142] Foucault (1997, 106) explains that "We must…note that this way out [i.e. the Enlightenment] is characterized by Kant in a rather ambiguous manner. He characterizes it as a phenomenon, an ongoing process, but he also presents it as a task and an obligation."

philosophical and ontological questions that were asked and being incredibly desirous of coming to a different conclusion but not being willing to accept something that would fall apart on the terms of the original critique.

zolo: Would you say that this sense of ethics is peculiar to Foucault?

David: So, in the *Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947) Simone de Beauvoir has written a beautiful book about what ethics would look like if we except finitude as being "ownmost" to being. It's about the positional effect of the very act of asking this question, about the effect of asking if something is certain. Not even is this certain but what would happen if we do or don't ask the question if it is certain? How will that affect things? I think what Foucault comes to in answering these questions is like, *"Indeed, even to inquire into the question of how does this operate, well why are you concerned with how? It comes back to very much a desire and will to knowledge. I'm concerned with how because I want to know, and that's the same thing that Heidegger is concerned with except it's ambiguous now. It's one step removed because its historical not ontological, but it's potentially the same step because it's asking the same question. It's an ontological question about history which goes back to ontology but an ontology that is historical."*[143] It's ambiguous. *"Do I care about what Heidegger said? Do I not? Am I concerned with*

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[143] In *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1969 [1972], 218) Foucault writes that "Certainly, as a proposition, the division between true and false is neither arbitrary, nor modifiable, nor institutional, nor violent. Putting the question in different terms, however—asking what has been, what still is, throughout our discourse, this will to truth which has survived throughout so many centuries of our history; or if we ask what it is, in its very general form, the kind of division governing our will to knowledge—then we may well discern something like a system of exclusion (historical, modifiable, institutionally constraining) in the process of development."

truth? Am I doing anything differently? Is the fact that I'm concerned with whether or not I'm doing something differently different from what Heidegger's doing?" It seems to be, yes.

zolo: What makes you say so?

David: Heidegger was a Nazi. There were certain things that he obviously didn't question. He didn't care very much about people. Foucault, on the other hand, was absolutely concerned with people. He wasn't willing to settle for ontology. He also struggled for ethics. One of the things that Foucault was saying, like many others, is *"The fuck man? Clearly there isn't an ontology that exists in the abstract."*

zolo: Wasn't that the purpose of phenomenology though? Getting to immediate experience? The "intentionality" of consciousness?

David: Yes, but it succeeded only to a certain extent. It left certain things unquestioned largely for personal and finite reasons. Foucault says, *"When we actually take the time to be concerned about what it means to be concerned about people, we realize that most of the things that people are concerned about are not indeed things that if you're really concerned about people you'd be concerned about. Here—these are all the things that Marxists are concerned about, but if Marxists were really concerned about people they'd be talking about these other things and this is how we should be talking about them."* And I read that as very much concerned with people. Take "power," for example...if we

want to know how power works, we wouldn't just talk about the economy, we wouldn't talk in generalistic ways or be overly state-focused or that sort of thing. Instead, we should want to get at the ambiguity of how things are because of what I believe to be a strong belief on the behalf of Foucault that there is a relationship between truth and goodness in the world. That revealing the truth about things would allow us to make things better.[144]

zolo: Did his work on power and sexuality have its desired effect?

David: I think in many ways it did, yes. I think he got a tremendous amount of satisfaction from writing those books and that this was because they touched people. They touched people in a way that is true and that's what he was looking for. There was a part of experience that hadn't been treated as an object of knowledge, and that by treating it as an object of knowledge that's how it touched people. It allowed them to think about their lives differently and created new possibilities for them. It emancipated people. But again, he didn't want it to be any willy-nilly thinking differently but a way of doing so that got at something deeper.

zolo: How have you retained all this information?

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[144] About his relationship with truth-seeking Foucault (1969 [1972], 220) says: "Only one truth appears before our eyes: wealth, fertility and sweet strength in all its insidious universality. In contrast, we are unaware of the prodigious machinery of the will to truth, with its vocation of exclusion. All those who, at one moment or another in our history, have attempted to remould this will to truth and to turn it against truth at the very point where truth undertakes to justify the taboo, and to define madness; all those, from Nietzsche to Artaud and Bataille, must now stand as (probably haughty) sign-posts for all our future work."

David: I'm glad I remember these things, but I don't know how. I've worked on a lot of things since my thesis at Trinity College that I don't remember at all. But I guess because a lot of it was deeply personal. Again, none of this is actually about Foucault. This is just me explaining my view of the world, he's just my foil. Like, my dad is vehemently anti-religion. I find that to be an absurd position. There's no basis for that kind of adamant secularism. It's so obviously internally incoherent. Sartre had a lot of moments like that too. That's why I'm always giving you such a hard time about nuance. This is the obsession with nuance, it's the ambiguity of ambiguity. Nevertheless, I'm coming from what I like to think is a very clear philosophical position which is concerned with a very clear ethical position...I'm interested in the relationship between truth and goodness. I want to live a good life, that's what I'm concerned with. I've always bought into the idea that there is some sort of connection between being knowledgeable and being good.

zolo: What exactly do you mean by the ambiguity of ambiguity?

David: What we know about something is ambiguous in the sense that we believe it to be true but we can't possibly know for certain because we know there are things beyond our finite horizon. With my thesis I was trying to describe two different ways that ambiguity derives from finitude. Step one is we exist in finitude; Heidegger's argument that we're always in time and in the world and that sort of thing. Toward death. Point two is that the condition of finitude leads to a condition of ambiguity. We can't know anything for certain because we're finite, and because we can only make some choices and not all the

choices. We can't live out all the possible ways of being. We have to make choices. We're finite because we're always faced with the choice of choosing. Even choosing not to choose is a choice in itself. The ambiguity, then, is between the choices. We have to choose one but we know it's not the only choice. Nothingness and identity are asymptotes of ambiguity. You're constantly caught between nothingness and identity, striving for both and reaching neither. Foucault, to my mind, says, *"Why do I have to have these as goals?"*[145] Maybe the goal of politics is to facilitate existential authenticity. But the part that takes priority is the maybe. *Maybe* politics is about ambiguity. *Maybe* it's important to facilitate existential authenticity. And that's what I'm trying to do now with law, I'm trying to figure out how law as a system, one of the social structures that exist in society, better facilitate existential authenticity. The affirmation of ambiguity.

zolo: I've always felt that it was a shame that you chose law school over a PhD. But not really at the same time. Like practically speaking it would have been a terrible decision.

David: Yeah after my M.A. thesis I felt like, "*Ok, I can either keep going in this direction and write a dissertation on basically the same thing, or I can say that's good enough and now it's time to go do something in the world."* If you have a theory that's like "*I'm ambiguous about whether things are ambiguous,"* then yeah, you can think about that until the cows come home. That's true, you can write books and books and books about that. But it doesn't mean anything. It has no truth value because you've already said I'm ambiguous about whether it can even ambiguously have truth value. And

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[145] For example, see the discussion of epistemes in the *Order of Things* (1966 [1989], 224).

it doesn't matter in the world because you're ambiguous about...well, everything. It's just not fruitful. The only response to the ambiguity of ambiguity is to just posit something. Just to do something practical.

zolo: So, law is consistent with the ambiguity of ambiguity?

David: That's indeed the debate. The potential of judgement is ambiguous, it's a way of being toward ambiguity. Making judgements is a part of finitude. God doesn't pass judgement; he knows, he's omniscient. In terms of law I believe care is the particular relationship that it should try and foster. Law is meant to foster more caring relationships not only but especially between people. The only way to evaluate what kinds of things to do in a particular finite situation is to anticipate what the effects will be. To have cares about the things that are figured to come. A lot of what law should be doing, in my opinion, is fostering better ways of being-with-others. It has to facilitate the other as human. So yeah, I see the project of law as trying to facilitate, make easier, better structure and pursue a caring society. A society in which there's a greater sense that because we are finite, we must make choices and those choices matter. Sometimes I struggle a little bit trying to think of how to care in a less naive way and trying to really put the teeth on it. I think being able to construct a story that's not an exclusive story is really important. In the West especially. It's important that the West is able to construct a story about the West that's not the West as opposed to fill-in-the-blank. And I do think law can have a role in framing it. There are so many aspects of the law that are overly

exclusionary that could be much more flexible. I think that in the end is a fairly straightforward project and so desirable.

As was his habit, David picked up the tab before leaving. On his walk home zolo thought about being unable to return the favour as frequently as he would have liked. Financially speaking, grad school had effectively prolonged the adolescent phase of life. He wished people had been more upfront about that. Given the state of the job market especially, shouldn't the unwealthy be discouraged from enrolling? He often felt as though he had been bamboozled into tens of thousands of dollars of student debt. Robbed of his independence. Lifting his eyes off the pavement zolo caught in his peripherals the passage of a roly-poly type man atop an origami folding bike. *"Gabriel?"* Walking up the staircase to the apartment he felt his heart rate begin to rise. With gurgling stomach and flushed face, he headed straight for the mirror. There in the washroom once more his fears were confirmed. The discolouration was back. *"Okay. It's only one colour, its less than an inch in diameter and its borders are well defined! It's nothing!"* But the train could not be returned to the station. A state of panicked hyper-vigilance quickly overwhelmed him. Frustrated and at his wits end, zolo picked and scratched wantonly beyond the first layer of skin to the dermis, until the wound had grown too painful to touch. Placing a hand against the mirror he hung his head and wept into the sink. Then, with the sensation of a hypnic jerk, he plunged into the glass.

Flashback: 1982[146]

A dream like the first but in a seaport with thousands. Along the perimeter people disposed of their ordure in the gutters, the smell of excrement blending in with the humid air.[147] American Marines, French Foreign Legionnaires and Italian Bersaglieri formed a procession leading toward the dock and a Greek vessel named *Atlantis*. Palestinian flags everywhere. Atop the roof of a nearby dockyard building stood Ariel Sharon, watching through binoculars as TV camera crews led Yasser Arafat down the procession.[148] After saluting the banners lowered towards him by a PLO honour guard at its rear, *abu* Ammar climbed aboard the ferry and flashed his patented two-finger victory sign.[149] The boy from the original dream emerged from the crowd. Now grown, he could be seen consoling a dark young woman with tight curly hair and *kuffiyyeh* on. Her cries wrenched open her mouth, revealing canines flush with her front teeth. As the ship pulled out of the dock people all around raised their rifles toward the sky. He had no chance to steel himself.

Dialogue Three: Exposure Therapy

Mike knocked loudly. *"I'm late for probation!"* Peeling himself off the floor zolo stopped to look into the mirror, expecting to find a fresh wound. But there wasn't so much as a scratch. *"Fuck it,"* he thought, *"I'm going to CBT."* Brushing past Mike on the other side of the door he left directly for campus. With hours to spare zolo waited by his tree, grasping at snippets

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[146] Following a three weeklong devastating siege on West Beirut by the IDF in 1982 the PLO capitulated and agreed to evacuate Lebanon. "For hours every day through the hot afternoons of late August, [one could] watch the Palestinian farewell to arms as thousands of PLO men drove in convoys of Lebanese army trucks down to the harbor. Arafat's Fatah guerrillas left in brand-new khaki unforms and kuffiahs, their faces cowled, rocket-propelled grenade-launchers on their backs" (Fisk 2001, 335).

[147] Ibid, 293.

[148] Ibid, 347.

[149] Ibid.

of his dream until his officemate Nusheen unexpectedly appeared in the quad. Usually as fiery as she was minute, her face that evening betrayed grave concern.

zolo: Nusheen! Over here! Hey, what's wrong?

Nusheen: Oh, hi! I'm afraid my brother Parsa may have been detained in Kermanshah by the culture police for participating in a labour demonstration. I think his texts must have been intercepted by the Ministry of Intelligence, but I don't know…

zolo: If he has been detained would the police at least contact your parents?

Nusheen: This has happened before to Parsa and his friends. Sometimes we do not hear from anyone for three or four days and, depending on how high the bail is set, he has been detained before for a month. Usually he is not tortured but it is really hard to keep track of him.

zolo: I'm sorry, I don't really know what to say.

Nusheen: It is ok, at this point these are really just minor inconveniences.

zolo: What do you think would make things better civil liberties wise? A new Ayatollah maybe? I've heard that Hassan Rouhani is more open.

Nusheen: Most people don't really buy into this, no. I actually think, and there are a number of people who do likewise, that there will not be a new Ayatollah. When Khamenei rose to become the next Imam, he didn't have his own exegeses. He was not like Khomeini, or someone like this who wrote interpretations of prayers. For example, Khomeini interpreted "the symbolic dimensions and inner meaning of every part of [*sharh du'a al-sahar]*, from the ablution that precedes it to the *salam* that concludes it."[150] But after he died someone then wrote a fatwa for the principle of *taqlid*, saying "*Oh no, the Ayatollah mustn't have exegeses necessarily if he refers to those of the previous one*!" And now there is even an internal dispute with the Mullahs over whether or not a single individual should ever succeed Khamenei. You know, those twelve Mullahs who decide on everything, like everything.

zolo: But isn't the Ayatollah the head of their committee, the *majlis*?

Nusheen: If you think of a Montesquieuian kind of division of power, yes. He is like the head of all these different elements of government, not just the *majlis* in particular. He's the head of the army, the Parliament, of everything…he's the king! But it is those Mullahs who really decide. And so even if Rouhani did succeed Khamenei, Iran would be no more inclined toward the liberal type of domestic and foreign policies which might lead to the US lifting its sanctions. That's why it's not really off the table removing the one-person Ayatollah thing, because anyway, aside from Khamenei, Rouhani, and Khamenei's son—who is very, very much hated—there is no one with the proper

[150] Abrahamian (1988, 269).

credentials…This is really funny, you know, how Iranian reformers and western scholars touted Kemalism[151] as an ideal type of secular Muslim society and suggested that Iran might become another Turkey.[152] In fact, Turkey is becoming another Iran. When Turkey was denied entry into the Schengen zone and Kemalism failed to give Turkey the international standing it desired, it resorted to Islamicizing the state as a means to expand its strategic horizons. What Erdogan is doing right now is the exact same as the Cultural Revolution that Khomeini did.

zolo: Maybe I'm being naive, but it seems like there are a lot of people in Turkey who are more or less in favour of what he's been doing, of the purge.

Nusheen: Well, his party in the last parliamentary election had fifty-five per cent of the vote or something like this. Even during the coup night, if you were following, he asked people to come into the streets to support him and they did, they came out and were shouting *allahu akbar* and these things. But Erdogan is not that smart. A civil war is really close in Turkey, not because they would initiate it but because Erdogan is very frightened. Very recently he said he's going to move the Arab refugees to the Kurdish cities…again and again following the same strategy. Just putting these two in front of each other so he can stay in his position, because you know in Turkey—this is not a rule

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[151] The founding republican ideology of Turkey implemented by Mustafa Kemal Attaturk establishing a secular democratic state.

[152] For a fascinating and far more nuanced study of religion in contemporary Turkish society, its "post-secularist" integration of "religious ways of being within a public arena shared by others who may practice different faiths, practice the same faith differently, or be non-religious in outlook," see Gökarıksel and Secor (2015).

but it happens—if the majority of city is not Kurdish it's impossible for them to become elected officials.

zolo: What exactly is he afraid of?

Nusheen: He's afraid of the HDP[153] because they received a very healthy portion of the votes in the last election. They're a newly established party in Turkey which is...Turkey wants to say it is like the PKK's[154] non-armed wing. And it is definitely an ally of the PKK because its founder Demirtas went to İmralı and he got his photo with Ocalan and that's how he could convince people to vote for him. Because, you know, the Kurds won't vote for someone that Ocalan doesn't support. But again, they have been very much independent because they are a legal party and obviously cannot follow whatever PKK wants to do. But HDP received, I think, twelve per cent of the votes in all the Kurdish cities which was really good for the time, it hasn't been like this in forty years or so, and it gained a lot of the Ministry positions. It was after this that Erdogan said he wanted to move the Arabs to the Kurdish cities. PKK responded by saying that if he does this and doesn't allow the Kurds to keep a hold on those ministry positions, they would go to war.

zolo: Do you think that the coup was staged by Erdogan as pretext for the purge?

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[153] The People's Democratic Party in Turkey. A pro-minority Kurdish public party.
[154] The Kurdistan Workers' Party. Far-left Kurdish militant organization operating in Turkey and Iraq.

Nusheen: I really don't think the coup was arranged by Erdogan, no, but I think he knew about it and didn't stop it. Three days before the coup the police went to Ankara's airport and some streets and began searching people for no reason, didn't say anything but arrested many. And three days after we have the coup? Also, Wikileaks released some information suggesting that he knew but let it go on.[155] This is the problem with Turkey, they are caught in a sick competition with Iran and Saudi Arabia. They're all competing to be the regional superpower, which is something really funny because in a Shmidtian sense of recognition, all that matters in international relations is having the power to recognize. It is even more important than if you are being recognized or not. Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia will never have the power to recognize and this is the problem of the Kurds too—always vying to be recognized. Look at the Balkan war—there were all these wars for ages and then they suddenly stopped once the boundaries of the various nation-states were closed by the imposition of that peace accord. My issue is that if Kurds in Syria, Turkey and Iran gain Iraqi-style independence then they would be losing their radicalness. Yes, their respective regimes will likely try and crush them otherwise, but I believe they would return. Always there will be Kurds.

zolo: You're saying that the idea of an independent Kurdistan has no purchase with you?

Nusheen: Yeah exactly. My main thing with Kurds is I really don't want to think of us as a state or anything fucked up like that. We are outsiders. The point of all the roles we play is that we are not inside, we are on the borders. Whoever wants to think about what

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[155] Andry Greenberg. "Wikileaks Dumps 'Erdogan Emails' After Turkey's Failed Coup." *Wired*, July 2016.

borderland is and what the subjectivity of a borderlander is—just think about the Kurds! Again, the thing is that within the international order substance doesn't matter; it doesn't really matter if you are an Islamic state or a Christian state or whatever the fuck you want to fill this structure with because form is pervasive. You know, the only thing that matters is the global hierarchy and the location of your country in that world order. Unfortunately, Marx and Marxism are true. This is what distinguishes Ocalan. He knows defining an alternative politics is not about defining borders and that Kurdish liberation cannot be achieved through state-building**,** through the creation of an independent Kurdistan.[156] What the PKK wants instead is to implement democracy without a state, or "a society that administers itself through small, self-governing decentralized units" that are internationally located.[157] Do you understand? I was trying to explain this to a Westerner yesterday. The point is to make Kurdish society independent from the nation and vice versa by having representatives "elected from popular face-to-face democratic assemblies" by Kurds in Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, etc. who coordinate to insure the autonomy and rights of those assemblies.[158]

zolo: Democratic confederalism, right? Isn't this your research?

Nusheen: Yeah well, I'm kinda starting from the point that...you know this claim that Derrida[159] and lots of poststructuralists make—and they're actually all coming from like

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[156] Akkaya and Jongerden (2012).
[157] Knapp, Flach and Ayboga (2016, 44).
[158] Ibid.
[159] In *Of Grammatology* (1997, 70-1), for example, Derrida writes: "The outside, 'spatial' and 'objective' exteriority which we believe we know as the most familiar thing in the world, as familiarity itself, would not appear without

a Bergsonian[160] tradition even though they do not necessarily refer to him—this idea that time is being written in special terms and the problem is that we've understood politics in terms of specialty[161] and not temporality. So, the way to go is to kind of de-specialize time on the one hand and define politics in terms of temporality on the other. Now, what temporality means is up for debate; for Benjamin[162] it is like a version of messianism, for Derrida[163] it is messianism without a Messiah like a version of charity...there are these different versions but they all share this idea, that, you know, special time is the enemy. My work starts from that point, a kind of a critique of these approaches for being all individualist and liberal and so reproducing the same Eurocentric notions of the self and sovereignty. And so they can never actually come to terms with self-determinations and movements that are going on in other time-spaces; they can never think about other people in terms of their own time-space. Derrida and the poststructuralists don't think we need any more self-determination, we just need to move into forms of cosmopolitanism. But this is kind of silly. Why do we need to move to that version of cosmopolitanism? Just because you are done with your sovereignty? Because, all of a sudden, you realized *"no more speciality?"* As you see, there are these kinds of nationalist calls coming up all over the world like Brexit, but there are also many movements, some of them radical

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grammer, without differance as temporalization, without the nonpresence of the other inscribed within the sense of the present, without the relationship with death as the concrete structure of the living present."

[160] For a discussion of the influence of Bergson on Derrida see Hodges (2008).

[161] "Speciality" refers here to "particular" or "non-cosmopolitan" forms of time-space.

[162] In *Thesis VI* Benjamin (1968, 254) explains: "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was.' It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain the image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it. The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer, he comes as the subduer of Antichrist. Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious."

[163] For example, see Derrida (2012, 33, 74, 82, 92, 111, 210-212, 227).

leftist like Rojava and others Islamist like ISIS, which imply a utopian world order and alternative version of self-determination. This is a question of rescaling the order of authority.

zolo: You've lost me. What is the order of authority?

Nusheen: There are two kinds of things at stake here. One of them is to think about the possibilities and limits of these international utopias...their notion of world-ordering and the limits and possibilities of self-determination coming with it. The other thing is to kind of think about how the special temporality of this current world-order has given rise to new imaginaries of world orderings. For me, it is a question of imaginaries...you know, like the formation of new imaginaries of world ordering rather than the actual practice of those things. One thing that really bothers me about Derrida,[164] for instance, is his claim that centres have a temporal structure. The centre is a telos or notion of where we are going in terms of time. It might be materialized in, like, the body of the King, a person or a place but nonetheless it is temporal and so metaphysical. But the problem is that the centre is not necessarily always temporal...like in the modern condition the centre can actually be purely special...like the specialty of one structure could actually act as a telos for another structure. Like in the perspective of a lot of people and countries in the Global South, the US is acting as a telos even though it is a space with a special determination. So it kind of creates intersections among structures...a complex topological kind of image of imaginaries coming out of this apparently monolinear but actually hierarchical

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[164] For example, see Derrida (1997, 67, 87, 309).

structure of the world order. Things do exist in the imaginary...it is because of their persistence in the imaginary that they can haunt the future and always return. There is no disappearing for ideas in history.

zolo: You are so special, Nusheen. You really amaze me.

Nusheen: I don't know, I don't know. I hope that coming to Canada wasn't for nothing, but I am not getting along with my supervisors and colleagues. They all tell me that I am "*Too dominant and ask too many questions*." I feel like, "*I am smarter than you. I am better than you literally in all ways, and I don't need your pitiful acceptance!"* But if I return to Iran, I will self-destruct!

In silence and without subtext they held hands for a while, outside in the cold, until zolo left to locate room 601 inside University Hospital. In the centre of it were four narrow tables arranged into a square. He took a seat at the corner furthest from the door. A frenetic younger woman in a blue and yellow letterman jacket entered the room shortly afterwards and took the seat next to him. Her light blonde afro reeked of cigarette. Peeking over his shoulder, zolo watched as she opened her notepad and resumed work on an enviably disagreeable self-portrait. With unsettling detail, she continued drawing her head onto the body of a scorpion. Only once Dr. Arthur entered the room with a social worker did zolo look away. Closing the door behind them, the pair of healthcare professionals sat with their backs to the chalkboard. Dr. Arthur congratulated everyone on their attendance before the social worker asked after the homework from the previous session. Apparently, the members of the group had been asked to prepare a

one-page synopsis of their greatest fear. Today, revealed the social worker, they would take turns reading them aloud. To the rumble from the room Dr. Arthur responded with a casual reminder: *"The more you manage to talk about it the less power it will have over you. Franny, would you please start us off?"* The scorpion souled woman didn't hesitate.

> **Franny:** I was fifteen when my depressive psychotic symptoms started to really overpower things. I remember this one day in particular when I was just doing some really weird shit. My dad and I were taking a drive through the bush near Sault Ste Marie and there was this spring or whatever and I took off my clothes and went in there and my dad thought I was trying to kill myself. Later that night at my grandparent's place I couldn't sleep because I just like crawled inside of myself and tried to figure out what to do and somehow I just ended up taking my dad's keys and tried to sleep in the car. I told my dad the next morning that I thought I needed help. They took me to the general hospital up there and then I was like "*Oh my God, everything makes sense now, this is so relieving*." But then that was just the start of the pain, right? That was the start of all the pain...they kept me there for like five days in the psych ward and I was like refusing to eat and locked myself in the washroom there. And yeah, they put me on a bunch of shit, I don't really remember what. I came out of there with prescriptions for clonazepam and seroquel and some other stuff. A referral to Sick Kids as an outpatient, even though I would have to leave in a few months once I turned sixteen. There they tried to get me to go back to school. I was like, "*What? I can't go back to school right now, like I'm fucking suicidal from the side-effects of the drugs I'm on and everything is even worse than it was before!"* So then I'm going to school and I think that my film teacher is the

devil and that he's basically telling me that I should just kill myself. I was obsessed with water, like drowning myself, you know? So like I went to the creek nearby and just walked around it and sort of waded in it. Eventually the hall monitor and the teachers came and pulled me out. At Sunnybrook, the adult hospital I had been reassigned to, they were like, *"Explain"* and I was like, *"Yeah I just wanted to drown myself."* Then I guess I got committed. I got changed and they put me in a wheelchair. Then you're just this like *"retarded"* and *"psychotic person,"* right? Just sitting in this like wheelchair while all these *"smart"* nurses are having gossip chats over you like "*Yeah, Sunday was really hard"* and all this shit to each other. I was in the patient intensive care unit for like five days, I think, and then I was put in the teen-ward for like three more weeks. They put you in the patient intensive unit first and that's all ages, that's when it's critical, and where they observe your behaviour and see if you're like good enough to be in the less restrictive ward where there are no cameras in the room and stuff like that, where you can kinda chill more. After being discharged from the teen ward, I basically got an eating disorder and I stopped taking seroquel because I'm like: "*I'm better now and it made me fat and I don't need to take that anymore."* So I stopped taking it and I started self-medicating with like pot and alcohol and like, alcohol is just really bad for me. And then I graduated somehow before moving to my mom's place in Laval where I worked in a grocery store. I found a pot link that was kinda sketch but whatever, someone I was working with at that place. So then I got really depressed again. I turned into an introvert and like I'm really sad when I'm an introvert because it kills me that I can't express something of myself and have it thrown back to me after it's gone through someone else's mind. I thought I would know people in Laval and see people on a regular basis,

but people are busy with their shit, right? And I didn't have my shit together, so I was kinda tossed aside in this, you know, very busy place in the winter and like seeing dead cats and stuff you know? So I went back to Toronto and I was like: "*I need a community, I need to make sense of everything, I need to connect everything, I'm more powerful than I know,"* just so fucking manic that I ran around the street trying to get to know everyone. That's the thing, people may have a vague memory or recognize me or some shit. I've just been in contact with so many people for so many different things that like my face might be like in a lot of minds. But that's when I went back to Sunnybrook. I stayed two weeks in the patient-intensive care unit again because I was writing on the walls like *"Get me out of here"* and I gave them orange juice instead of a sample of my pee and like didn't take my meds for a little bit because I was just not about that shit. I was fighting back. I remember this seventeen-year old Muslim dude that was screaming at the top of his lungs for like hours and hours, being restrained to this bed and like I would open the curtain and try smiling, like "*Everything's ok*," because I was trying to help everyone, I was manic, right? So I was trying to like uplift and make everyone happy all the time. Eventually they started like locking me in my room. And this is the thing, like styrofoam cups from like meal-time became a hot commodity for me. I would keep them and hide them under the bed because when they locked me in there, I would be like "*Yo I really need to pee"* and they'd be like "*Whatever, whatever"* and ignore me. I'd be like crying in front of this door being like—"*I just need to pee!"*— and they just denied my humanity, right? Wearing this fucking hospital gown…and so I would pee in the cups, right? Twice. But then they started taking away the cups because I'd crumple them up and try to block the door with them, so the third time they locked me up and I really

needed to pee I took a sheet and put it on the ground and peed on it in the corner under the camera. Then the big fat Italian security guard came in through the door and grabbed me by the arm and, you know, so I like fought back and she's throwing me in the room and people are looking through the door. I like grab her glasses and I throw them across the room and I rip her keys and I throw them under the bed. She was twisting my arm hard and I was shouting, *"You're breaking my arm, you're breaking my arm!"* I think that's when I kicked her but I can't really remember. Afterwards Dr. Arthur was like, *"So you kicked a security guard? What's your explanation for that?"* just trying to be like *"You have a mental instability and need to accept that."* I was like, *"I don't remember because you put me on these crazy drugs you crazy person!"* I hated him after that whole thing. We had like long conversations but he never wanted to know anything about my life. He just wanted to treat whatever symptoms I had, you know? But I forgave him eventually because he started helping me, you know? He even said, *"I just want you to achieve the goal of living a meaningful life. Being held back by all this stuff, being here is not where I want you to be,"* you know? Anyway, I guess what I'm most afraid of is having control taken away from me again.

Dr. Arthur thanked Franny for her candor and acknowledged to the room his pleasure with her progress. The room applauded. In the direction away from zolo they then continued with the reading of synopses. Though none were quite as colourfully demented and multidimensional as Franny's, they nevertheless had a similar effect on him. They gave zolo that small feeling as the space between his ears heated up. Just prior to the scheduled intermission a

southeast Asian man with a short ponytail introduced himself as Upjeet. He prefaced what he had to say by explaining that it was about his wife.

Upjeet: We were at a Canada Day party. I was making tea in the kitchen when Jen came in to grab a beer. She looked my way and sort of announced her interest with a big pretty smile, but I cowered. Being more mature and self-assured, she lingered a while longer, you know, asking me to reconsider. And I did, eventually. I remember someone asking that night how long we'd been together, and how confidently they predicted *"You're about to be!"* We went on our first date the next day, dinner at the Mexican restaurant next to the children's museum. I could tell she was impressed when I coolly accepted the wrong order from our nervous young waiter. We went to the park afterward and watched the fireworks before going back to my place. Without consummating anything, we just hung out all night and talked. It was great. But the next morning I left on vacation to India with my family. We made plans to stay in-touch over e-mail, plans I was nervous about. I didn't feel like playing those games, like *"how long should I wait before responding."* But there was none of that. It was all so reassured. Jen and I dated for three years before I proposed to her. For our honeymoon we went on safari in Saharan Africa. Absolutely beautiful. A year after that we had our boy. I was certainly very, very happy and I have every right to believe that she was as well. But then, about six months ago, this unspeakable thought occurred to me. About Aarav. I brushed it off at first, but it kept coming back. It was like trying to outrun a fucking rockslide. Every day it intruded more frequently and at increasingly inopportune times. Soon I forgot how to convince myself that nothing had actually happened and started to avoid him. When Jen confronted me

> and demanded to know why I just clamed up. I couldn't say it. I couldn't say anything. God, she was so pissed. I've never seen anyone so angry. She became very suspicious and took Aarav to her parents' place. I've tried everything to get into contact with her, but she refuses to talk. And to tell you the truth, even if she were to hear me out, I still don't think I'd be able to say the words to her. No matter how pissed she got. I just can't bring myself to do it. The idea just kills me. Funny how a single thought can really ruin everything.

With a big exhale, zolo had found his purpose. It was now blindingly obvious to him that he was put on earth to make amends for the misfortunes of Upjeet, to embody a countervailing mercy. A clarion call of duty that granted him the sensation of a "return to the innocent conscience of the wild beast [and] exultant monsters," the conscience of those "who [have] perhaps…committed a hideous succession of murder…in a mood of bravado and spiritual equilibrium…convinced that poets will now have something to sing about and celebrate for quite some time."[165] zolo went to the parking lot during intermission and picked out a hunk of limestone roughly the size of his fist. With it nestled in his backpack he wore a placid smile throughout the second half of the session, all the while thinking about bludgeoning Upjeet. Exempt from the exercise on the basis of it being his first time in group, the social worker instead asked zolo if he could promise to prepare his own synopsis for the following session. He did so enthusiastically. By way of concluding Dr. Arthur then reminded everyone that exposure therapy encourages coping skills, counterconditioning, and even cognitive change.[166]

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[165] Nietzsche 2007, 23.
[166] Kendall, Robin and Hedtke 2005.

Closely behind his muse zolo subsequently crept through the halls of the hospital. Down and up again through its various floors he matched Upjeet stride for speeding stride until suddenly he veered into a washroom on the thirteenth. With the overhead lighting beginning to flicker, zolo stopped outside to catch his breath and reach for the rock. His vision was warped, its field and the borders of the items within it curved and swirling. He stumbled through the door.

Flashback: 1993

His mother, young, at the cash register of a hair salon. Another woman entreating her for something. A small boy clung to the strange woman's leg. It was him. On second thought the woman wasn't so strange either. Finally, she smiled.

Coda

In *History Beyond Trauma* (2004) the renowned analysts Francoise Davoine and Jean-Max Gaudilliere expound on their understanding of madness as “a form of social link in an extreme situation” (xxii). Having spent their careers treating the psychotic descendants of heroes, victims and traitors of the great European wars of the 20th century, it is clear to the Drs. that “[w]ars on whatever scale—worldwide, civil or ethnic wars, wars of decolonization—are such extreme circumstances, in which the breakdown of all reference points gives rise to links outside the norm” (Ibid). Their patients demonstrated to them that the aftereffects of war “br[ought] about in family lines…call for the same immediacy in critical moments, sometimes fifty years later” (Ibid, 167). Or rather, “stories of deep connection and pain must be told. If for some reason, they cannot…[i]f they are unthinkable, their traces or debris are carried generationally and lived as madness by someone charged—in the double sense of an energy and a duty—to represent…the family’s archaic heritage” (Fromm 2004, xiii).[167] Accordingly, in the madness of zolo discerning readers will have detected “a frantic effort to bring a foreclosed social connection into existence” (Ibid, xi). zolo’s contiguity to Gabriel spurred an episode of OCD that gave him valuable insight into his family history; the drama of inheritance staged by the Flashbacks confirms “the relationship between social catastrophe and the breakdown of families,” the force

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[167] Davoine and Gaudilliere (2004, 4) give the example of a patient whose family “had done business with Germany for a long time [and] had been caught up in the settling of scores during the purge after the war. Afterward his parents began a new life. His birth helped them to forget the past. [He] was to know nothing while his mother, in silence, was slowly dying of cancer. He cherished a very tender memory, without drama, of this fatal illness. Then life resumed its course, as if nothing had happened. Now this ‘nothing’ was brought to the analyst in condensed form.” And so, it was “difficult simply to say that the war had made him crazy; Auguste had not lived through that period, and he was the only one among his siblings to present these striking problems” (Ibid, 5). As with the phenomenon of synchronicity, then, “[o]bjective causality comes up against serious limits here” (Ibid). Meaning, the connection between madness and war.

that is generated by a “rupture of transmission along the fault lines of the social link” (Davoine and Gaudilliere 2004, xiv, 37).

The blending in zolo’s dreams of various “times and places told a story as compacted as the blocks of snow in an avalanche” (Ibid, 18). One necessarily ending on an ambiguous note. Did zolo really bludgeon Upjeet? Did he ever even make it to the session of group therapy? What will he do with the information he has acquired about the identity of his birth parents? Where’s the resolution? The frustration here, or, as I hope, the vast majority of it, is intentional. The telling of the story alone was meant to evoke transcendence, the assumption of risk inherent to its writing. By way of conclusion the current chapter summarizes the lesson in ethics and representation that has informed this strategy, the one I gained from the development of my understanding of the problem posed to me by assimilation, the antagonism between the spheres of home/family and school/society, as well as the major findings related to the fields of study outlined in the introduction.

Summary of the Study

Chapter 1 introduces the problematic of this dissertation: the fate involved in my becoming a Native Informant and the ethical challenges ensuing therefrom. Am I capable of undoing the effects of my assimilation? How might my knowledge help facilitate that undoing? Can I know something in a way that does not anesthetize me to it? After the background Chapter 2 provides regarding the *hala al-islamiyya*, the culture I associate with the sphere of home/family, the competition that ensued over my allegiance and sense of identity between it and majoritarian Canadian multiculturalism, the sphere of school/society, is analyzed in Chapter 3. This chapter charts the development in my understanding of the antagonism between the two

spheres, its presence in my life and the meanings I have drawn from it. It proceeds phenomenologically in the sense that the phases it unfurls give way to one another, a subsequent and higher truth. From the emergence of the desire to be the same (Prevarication) to my rebellion against the *hala* (Detachment) to my failed attempt at a self-reflective program of culturally grounded de-subjectification (Freedom) and finally the realization that the threat of my discolouration exists in tension with the hope for change (Objective Irony). Reversing my assimilation, I now understand, requires affirming the risk of being a latecomer, the beauty and consolation in the gaze falling on horror. Because to do otherwise would be to give into neuroses and fear, "pillars of society" threatening to crush my better potential (Adorno 2015, 298). Chapter 3 closes with an application of this principle of affirmation to the tasks of decolonization and representation in the name of the subaltern object (Varadharajan 1995, 38). In terms of decolonization, this entails processing the family history beyond my trauma as a child migrant, turning my attention to the repairs the sphere of home/family is crying out for. So far as representation is concerned, the aspect of my duty to the subaltern which fits more squarely within the parameters of this project, affirming my neuroses entails transforming the opportunity of writing a dissertation into one for practicing resistance against that shrinking feeling, the pull of the ineffable negativity that my life is so clumsily oriented around. This is the point of Chapter 4, an ambiguous evocation of the horrified gaze of a (Shia) Lebanese-origin youth. In addition to a method for avoiding the practice of synthesis within the text, the chapter's creative nonfiction approach aspires to the higher standard of vulnerability in artwork, of proximity to the object.

Findings Related to the Fields

In what follows, I group the central most findings of this dissertation according to the fields of study first mentioned in the introduction: migration studies, subaltern studies and human geography. Of course, many of the findings across the three fields are interrelated. In my summaries I have tried to convey this. In addition, I have considered certain relevant counterarguments.

Migration Studies

Within the existing literature on the assimilation of Lebanese-origin youth into Canada I set out to redress shortcomings related to the estimation of differential integration within family units, the antagonism between the spheres of home/family and school/society, and the relative heteronomy of Lebanese and Canadian culture. In terms of differential integration, I have shown that the conflict it creates between the first and subsequent generations is of far greater consequence than, for example, Baha and Sharon Abu-Laban (1999, 150) or Tastsoglou and Petrinioti (2011, 193) have recognized. In adolescence a desire to fit in with my peers, to be the same as them, drove a wedge between me and my parents. It changed the tenor of our relationship entirely. As they became increasingly suspicious and controlling, I in turn developed a trait for evasiveness and dishonesty. The history beginning with this period—one of so many arguments, deceits and recriminations—makes for heavy baggage. My aversion to this baggage, an important component of our family history, is the source of my most persistent problems. Like neuroses, yes, but more extensively this distance between me and the things I know. While I cannot say exactly how widely this experience may be shared among Canada's Shia Lebanese-origin youth, I do however vividly recall the extent of the concern that those of us in White Oaks shared over being seen in public with the wrong kind of classmate, at the bunny hill, in the movie

theatre parking lot or on a walk home from school. Indeed, the impact on us of the complications and complexities of a double life or personality are entirely predictable (see Ramadan 2004, 127). Given the reach of these complications, it surprised me how greatly the conflict arising from differential integration within family units is underestimated in the existing literature.

The primary reason for this, I believe, is a miscomprehension of the nature of the antagonism between the spheres of home/family and school/society. It does not ease over time (Hayani 1999, 295) because it is not rooted in "backward" (Tastsoglou and Petrinioti 2011, 180) or "parochial" (Abdelhady 2011, 76) elements of a monolithic "Lebanese" (Ibid, 49) or even "Arab" (S. and B. Abu-Laban 1999, 121) culture that are easily attenuated through contact with enlightened multiculturalism (Abdelhady 2011, 108). The teleology I detect in the literature may indicate haste to reassure majoritarian Canadians about the "strangers within their gates" (Day 2000, 190), what I assume to be a reaction to the Islamophobia that took root in North America following the first Gulf War. As if to say, "Stop your discrimination. They're just like us" (B. and S. Abu-Laban 1999, 148), "happy to be in Canada" (Hayani 1999, 302). In a rush to minimize difference the research has failed to live up to the standard of critical anti-Islamophobia (Hage 2016, 45), the idea that "there are many ways of being politically Muslim [that] are scary in a good anticolonial way." Following instead the counterexample set by Al-Fartousi (2016), I contribute to the body of research an autoethnography conveying my experience of enlightenment's dialectic, of the freedom I pursued at school paving the way for my capture by the most peremptory and disenchanting source of authority. Like the other contributors, I once associated the sphere of home/family with heteronomy and the sphere of

school/society with individual flourishing, until I was shown the "industrial" bulwark of the latter's normative framework: majoritarian Canadian multiculturalism.[168]

Slavoj Žižek (1997, 47), for one, might argue that the form of my rejection of the universality of "multiculturalist postmodernism" is incomplete. Because "Adorno (the most sophisticated 'elitist' critical theorist) is [Pat] Buchanan (the lowest of American rightist populism)" (Ibid). Or rather, Žižek might say that I have "risk[ed] endorsing neo-conservative populism, with its notions of the reassertion of community, local democracy and active citizenship, as the only politically relevant answer to the all-pervasive predominance of 'instrumental Reason,' of the bureaucratization and instrumentalization of our life world" (Ibid, 47-8). Accordingly, one must

> reject the opposition which…imposes itself as the main axis of ideological struggle: the tension between "open" post-ideological universalist liberal tolerance and the particularist "new fundamentalisms."…The entire consistency of the Left hinges on…reference to the true Universality to come. Or, to put it another way, the Left simultaneously accepts the antagonistic character of society (there is no neutral position, struggle is constitutive), and remains universalist (speaking on behalf of universal emancipation). (49-50)

The Universality to come, we are told unironically, is Christianity, or at least Žižek's version of Christianity as representing "the death of the God of the Beyond. It is God himself, the God of the Beyond and not only Jesus, who dies on the cross. The God of the Beyond dies and is resurrected as the Holy Spirit," a community of believers deprived of its support in a prescribed order of life (Zimeri 2015, 257). Christianity, as the religion of atheism, is therefore the answer

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[168] Again, on one crucial point I do find myself in disagreement with Al-Fartousi (2016, 197). The influence I came under at school was not in spite of Canada's official policy of multiculturalism. The gaze that I hoped would be returned to me belonged to the universal No-Thing, the "disembodied Mosaic floating in an empty space" (Day 2000, 9). What I wanted was the freedom to be the same, and this meant precisely nothing at all. If I fetishized being "English," "French" or "Canadian" it was only to the extent that I believed being so entailed the freedom to consume whatever commodity I wanted, to be seen as congruent with the lifestyles they conveyed.

to the paradox faced by the Left, the need to accept the antagonistic nature of society while remaining universalist in orientation. This in a nutshell is the root of Žižek's problem with Islam, its undoing of Christ's crucifixion, its reversion to a wholly transcendent God,[169] A God whose "fundamentalism" lends itself to the "masculine logic" of global capitalism (Zimeri 2015, 259). The God of Islam, accordingly, is a figure of the big Other, a reactionary deception that Christianity supposedly circumvents with the figure of the Holy Spirit, a "collective link of love" (Ibid, 261).

Not wanting to launch into a deserved though simultaneously worn critique of Žižek's Eurocentrism, I will limit my reply to this specific point. Islam, as can be imagined, does not see its relationship to Christianity in the way that Žižek does. It rather sees itself as "an eloquent articulation of the failure of Christianity to be the last religion. If Christianity revealed what Judaism was trying to keep secret, namely that there is nothing to reveal, then what Islam revealed is the failure of Christianity to stabilize into a tradition of emancipation and/or community not grounded in some form of the existence of the big Other" (Zimeri 2015, 261). Put differently, Islam "palpably" questions whether or not the Holy Spirit as conceived by Žižek, meaning outside the support of a transcendental God, is sustainable as a large-scale emancipatory project (Ibid, 262).[170] Indeed, it might be said the existence of such a God and the necessity of

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[169] The Quran (4:15) denies that the crucifixion occurred. "And for their saying, 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God'—yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them. Those who are at variance concerning him surely are in doubt regarding him; they have no knowledge of him, except the following of surmise; and they slew him not of a certainty—no indeed."

[170] When Žižek (2006, 79) argues that the Holy Spirit has been realized outside of the Church as an institution, as with revolutionary political parties and psychoanalytic societies, observes Zimeri (2015, 262-3), the Slovenian "says more than what he probably intends to say, namely, that communities that have realized the Idea of Christianity are either temporally short-lived, that is, revolutionary parties, or extremely small communities, that is, psychoanalytic societies. If this is the case then emancipation is extremely limited in its scope, and very few, if any, are completely emancipated. This hardly constitutes the truth of Lacan's motto '*Il n'y a pas de grand Autre*' (There is no big Other) but the problem of its realization in durable and sustainable political institutions."

presupposing it appear to be separate matters in Islam (Ibid). The Islamic big Other, its symbolic order and prescribed life forms, trains “Hope,” meaning “the collective horizon of expectations” that must remain open if emancipation is ever to be achieved (Ibid, 263). This is evident in, for example, the Quran’s statement that the righteous shall inherit the earth (21: 105). Obviously, the outcome of the struggle over the earth between its righteous and evil forces is not guaranteed by an omniscient higher power. No serious Muslim would suggest otherwise. What matters is precisely “the struggle itself, not the outcome—but [that] the subject who struggles continues to do so under the horizon of the principle of Hope” (Ibid). Comparatively, the Paulinian love or “agape” of Žižek (2006; see also Chiesa and Toscano 2007 and Goodchild and Phelps 2017), as all “conscious” solidarities of the whole, fails to inspire much Hope.

Subaltern Studies

For me what sealed the complicity of power and knowledge was the irony of my becoming a Native Informant. Or rather the twist of fate which saw marginality rise to the level of white popular culture (Whiteout 2018). Becoming a Native Informant suggested that the effects of my assimilation cannot be undone, that I can never know for sure if my self-reflective program of culturally grounded de-subjectification is motivated by the urge to accommodate myself to my peer group or not. This urge which drove my assimilation in the first place. I now gather that the business of agency is tricky for all those who have been woken up to the fact of mental miscegenation (Varadharajan 1995, xvi). For those who have had to reckon with the limits of what they know in the context of striving to decolonize themselves. While I am doubtful of the existence of a single, universally applicable solution to this predicament, I attempted with this dissertation to share the solution I have applied within the determinate context of my own existence. Following the dawn of Objective Irony, I was sapped of all hope

for change. My estimation of myself shrunk steadily, as everywhere I looked, I saw evidence of my being “absorbed by mediocrity” (De Mesel 2015, 561). In these strange, persistent synchronicities. Among the most pernicious were those dealt by the figure of the negator, the peer who, in their total transparency, reflected my own identity with popular culture. The scene-bound SJW who confronted me with backfiring motives. This episode of sullenness culminated in an episode of hypochondria; a period of months spent trying to convince myself of the benign nature of a small discolouration that appeared on my brow. A synchronicity itself, the discolouration led me to realize the implication of my neuroses being a pillar of society, that the very thing which makes the thought of transcendence unconscionable paradoxically makes it unavoidable (Bernstein 2001, 427). In terms of decolonization tapping into the tension between my discolouration and the hope for change meant addressing the family history beyond my trauma, understanding it as a type of connection to the *hala*. In terms of the concomitant issue of social justice, this entailed adopting a standard of reflexivity and representational tact that I have attempted to uphold through the integration of various methods for investigating questions concerned with consciousness and interiority including autoethnography, phenomenology and creative nonfiction.

More frequently representational politics is intended to redress the matter of being produced as Other by the colonial text (see for example Jazeel 2019, 2006). With respect, I believe that the case of “upper-middleclass [people from the ex-colonies] confronting the realization that they [have been] inserted into [metropole] society as an ‘exotic’ and sexualized difference” (Jazeel 2019, 18) is no longer paradigmatic of the postcolonial experience. A more pressing concern today, in the context of marginality and social justice becoming popular culture, is the exchange of ideas for affirming the risk of discolouration, of finding consolation in

being a latecomer or epigone. If postcolonial intellectuals are to persist with the tasks of decolonization and representation, what we require are methods with which to fan the hope for change. To that end, this study was intended as an example of how a postcolonial intellectual or Native Informant might go about thinking their thought and perhaps even healing their knowledge. The consolation I found in the unalleviated gaze falling on horror is this autoethnography, the effort it took to so artfully (i.e., painfully) pin myself down.

Human Geography

In "Beyond Malinowski and After *Writing Culture*" (2002) George E. Marcus sympathizes with the bind of graduate students in anthropology, caught as they are "between the appeal of second projects of established professors and the traditional paradigm of ethnography still in force as the training model" (192). "Each spring," he explains, "I am mostly taken up with reading both graduate student dissertations and proposals for fieldwork. I have noted that the most interesting projects among our students are, like the exemplars of established scholars, experiencing the same conditions of changed circumstances of work, but without…the freedom to experiment as in the second and later projects of established scholars" (Ibid, 198). Accordingly, the exemplary second projects, "often begin[ning] from a very personal agenda and [without] a predictable 'standard' ethnographic monograph outcome," that draw graduate students to anthropology are addressed to the relevance that the discipline enjoys outside of its "own continuing efforts at self-definition and self-promotion," an outcome of the prominent role it played in the era of "interdisciplinary ferment in the human sciences" during the 1970s and 1980s, its interaction with post-structuralism, literary studies, feminism and, crucially, area studies (Ibid, 193). For Marcus (Ibid) the very survival of anthropology hinges on "the possibility for an alternative paradigm of ethnography that legitimates and establishes the

character of what I have termed second projects equal to that of the traditional paradigm." The *Writing Culture* critique, a product of the interdisciplinary ferment which exposed much of the human sciences to postcolonialism and the politics of representation, must itself become part of the training model. Because the historic presence of postcolonial intellectuals in the academy demands it.

And what of graduate students drawn to geography by the exemplary projects of established anthropologists? Is there any sympathy to spare for them? For the young ethnographers who belong to a discipline that prefers prefixes like Economic, Political and Environmental to specialization and expertise in terms of certain people, places and languages (Ibid, 193; see also Sidaway et al. 2016 and Sharp 2019)? If anthropology, a discipline near synonymous with reflexivity, is concerned it lacks a sufficiently progressive representational politics, one that actually impacts on institutions like the graduate dissertation, then the prognosis for geography must be dire indeed. For geography's influence to reach well beyond the confines of Anglophilia, for it to be truly renewed, it must first adjust its institutions to respond to the changing circumstances of work, the needs of its students of colour (Mahtani 2006, 23). In the present dissertation I have attempted to convey a sense of the obstacles geography's institutions present to such students. I have also hinted at a relatively simply improvement that can be made. Geography Departments, I believe, should be more welcoming of experimentation, such as reflexive forms of research like autoethnography. This would allow its students of colour to partake in "the contemporary reinvention of ethnic identity through remembering," work "predicated on a moral vision, on a vibrant relation between a sense of self and a community, on a retrospective or prophetic appeal to a community of spirit" (Fischer 1986, 197). For, again, it is

much to the discipline’s own detriment that its institutions continue to work against undertakings such as these.

Future Research & Concluding Remarks

I have offered something approaching a developmental model for assimilation, a series of phases that I hope will provide others with a chance to reflect upon their own experience. It should go without saying that I do not expect all the phases to apply to my sister, for example, or to an ethnic Chinese Malaysian studying in Liverpool. Some of them might but in different ways and to largely varying extents. Nevertheless, what both have in this dissertation is a version of the story to work with that takes for granted the emancipatory kernel in deficient adaptation to the host environment. In the instance of the literature on the assimilation of Lebanese-origin youth into Canada, especially, such a version is wanting. This effort, again, is but a starting point. To engage with, criticize and contradict it would be to do it a great honour.

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Appendix: Sample Interview Questions

1. Civil War

A. How old were you when the War began?

B. How did you become aware of the conflict?

C. How did the war affect the geography of Beirut?

D. How did it affect travel?

E. Did you belong to any political parties or organizations at the time?

F. From your perspective, how many phases of the War were there? What were they?

2. *hala*

A. When did you first hear the term *hala al-islamiyya*?

B. How would you define the *hala*?

C. What were your early impressions of Hizballah?

D. How do you suppose they maintain the support of their followers?

E. Has your opinion of the Party changed overtime? How?

3. Emigration

A. Did you attempt to emigrate from Lebanon at any point in the War?

B. If not, why?